SCHÖNBRUNN

J. A. CRAMB

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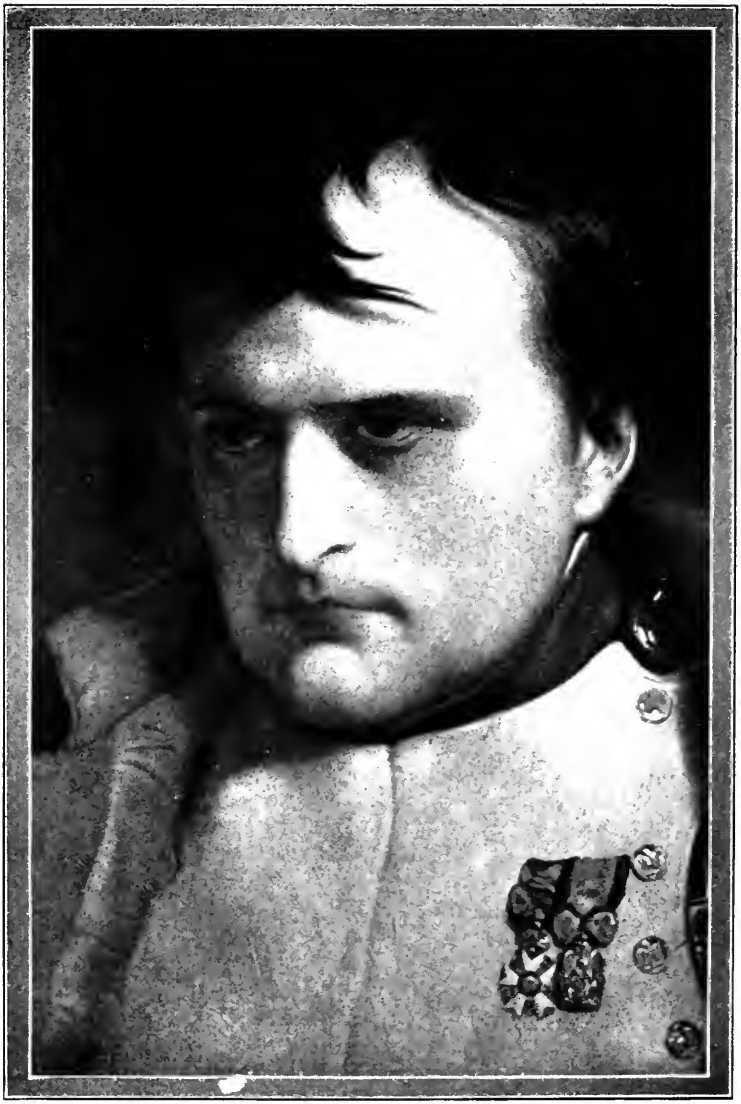

NAPOLEON

From the Painting by Delaroche in the Collection of the Duke of Portland

This engraving represents approximately the author's conception of Napoleon's appearance at the period of the story, *i. e.*, 1809. It has been criticized as "idealization"; in reality, Delaroche has treated his subject somewhat as Kresilas treated the portrait of Pericles in the famous bust; he has, in Furtwängler's phrase, not "idealized," but "universalized" it.

Photo Braun.

SCHÖNBRUNN

A NOVEL

BY

J. A. CRAMB

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Palazzo Esterthal	1
II.	The Noon Parade	42
III.	Napoleon's Ride	68
IV.	The Assassin	86
V.	The Mind of a City	141
VI.	The Making of a Poet	164
VII.	A Viennese Supper Party	192
VIII.	Napoleon's Dream	217
IX.	The Masked Ball	281
X.	Napoleon's Address to his Guard	313
XI.	On the Track of a Crime	331
XII.	An Emperor and his Secretaries	349
XIII.	An Idyll at Mödling	371
XIV.	A Viennese Poet and a Viennese Composer	392
XV.	"So Stirbt ein Held!"	413
XVI.	Epilogue	432

SCHÖNBRUNN

CHAPTER I

THE PALAZZO ESTERTHAL

I

"NO, Toc, I cannot go with you to this parade. For myself, I do not care two straws whether Bonaparte is a black or a white man. To me, this demi-deity of aspiring ramrods is simply a hustler; and, therefore, I suppose, I am a harsh judge of his enthusiasts. All the same, I protest against you women of Vienna crowding to stare at the humiliator of Germany—this burglar in a palace of the Cæsars! Austria should be an example to other nations; Vienna to other cities. By God, what will be said of us in the Tyrol, at Munich, Frankfort, Kōnigsberg, or in Berlin itself?"

Count Johann Markowitz, a man of four and thirty, just returned from an abortive mission to Petersburg, swung aside from the Princess Dürrenstein and the small group of men and women whom he had thus been addressing, and, walking to a window, stood staring moodily past the heavily fringed curtains at a patch of sunshine on the lawn. The higher branches of a juniper tree worked on it a fantastic pattern like ebony inlaid on dull gold, and farther off two gardeners were emptying a barrow full of dead

leaves upon a fire. Its smoke rose in a pillar through the windless autumn day.

Toc, Princess Dürrenstein, looking very tall and graceful in a clinging gown of fine silk under her high and nodding ostrich plumes, came up to her former lover and said to him almost timidly:

"What are we women to do? You are severe on us, Johann."

"Severe! Look yonder! Look at our brave Viennese! And it is hardly ten o'clock. There is Austrian patriotism!"

He pointed to a strip of road a mile away, white with heat and sunlight. It was dotted with human figures, some on foot, some on horseback, some in the lumbering Austrian calèche harnessed to four or six horses, others in hackney coaches, in berlines, in landaus, in hired waggons without springs, but all streaming in one direction—southward towards Schönbrunn.

"Well," said Berthold Stahrenberg, coming up behind them and laying his hand on Johann's shoulder, "what is there wrong in all this? It is Friday, and our worthy fellow-townsmen have on their Sunday coats, and their wives their embroidered stockings. What should they do but blacken the road to Schönbrunn? Why, it proves that we Viennese know a great man when we see one and like to sun ourselves in his neighbourhood—that is all."

The irony was inopportune, and Count Johann shook off the white, finely-made hand emerging from its delicate lace cuff.

"It proves that we Germans want heroic hate, and therefore want heroic energy; it proves, too, why we Austrians are defeated whenever we make war against that man; and why Wagram repeats Marengo, and Aspern, Arcola. Very near but never quite a victory, and so from disaster to disaster we flounder on."

There was an awkward silence—the silence which falls

upon men and women who are compelled unexpectedly to look at themselves in an impartial mirror.

The Palazzo Esterthal in which this scene took place on the morning of Friday, the 13th of October, 1809, had, during the French occupation, become the rendezvous of the few great families who still remained in Vienna. Morning by morning throughout that summer and autumn they had met and talked amid the sombre magnificence of its rooms, or sauntered about its gardens, or sat in the impenetrable shade of the two cedars which guarded the main avenue.

Berthold Stahrenberg, who in this society in which every man and woman had a nickname was known as "Bolli," made a gesture of comical despair and went back to a sofa, beside the Countess Prostkeiya, whose pet name Lan-Lan suited her rich figure and placidly luxurious features.

"Smell these roses," Lan-Lan said, "and forget all else. Each blossom has its own texture, its own odour."

"Like women's hair and women's hands," Bolli murmured abstractedly.

"Indeed? How many women's hair or women's hands have you tested then? Hein? Tell me."

"One—one only!"

She reddened and had no immediate answer.

Bolli, though not yet five and twenty, threatened by his gallantries to eclipse the fame of Prince Puckler Prasler himself. Lan-Lan had at first disregarded his assiduities, but during the past three or four weeks something in his voice and manner had begun to affect her troublingly.

"But what would you have us women do?" Toc persisted, still standing beside Count Johann. Her soft yet vibrant Polish accent was very marked against his Austrian baritone. "You do not wish us to enroll ourselves into a fighting corps and make Nusschen our captain?"

Nusschen, Bolli's youngest sister, a girl of seventeen,

with a swinging careless gait, had at that moment come forward from a group in another part of the hall. She was a Stahrenberg every inch, one of the race which had given to Austria not only the hero of the siege of Vienna by the Turks, but a series of crusaders, warriors, and statesmen.

"I should just love that! Forward! On, ye brave! O Doña Burida, why have I not your chances!"

To Nusschen's girl's enthusiasm the exploits of the Maid of Saragossa against Napoleon's marshals, which were now reaching Vienna, read like those of a nineteenth-century Joan Darc.

"That is not for the women of Vienna," Count Johann answered. "Theirs is a nobler part—to teach our conquerors how to waltz. After the parade this morning it is the masked ball to-night, is it not?"

This was addressed in a veiled but savage sarcasm to Toc. Nusschen looked from the one to the other in perplexity.

But at this point Bolli's satellite, Rudolf Kessling, grandson of that Wilhelm Kessling, the grain merchant of Prague, whom for his great wealth and public spirit Maria Theresa had enrolled in the reluctant ranks of the Austrian nobility, took up the part that Bolli had dropped and attempted to answer Count Johann. He dressed expensively and affected to be a wit, but his dress was often in bad taste and his wit was always German. As Bolli himself admitted semi-apologetically, "You can never be sure what Kezy is going to say or what Kezy is going to wear. But what chance has he?"

"The French are in a manner our guests," Kessling now declared with false emphasis. "Why should we not teach them how to waltz—the few at least whom a fellow can invite to the Mehlmarkt."

"Our guests!"

Johann's exclamation was as full of hate as of contempt. At Petersburg and at Warsaw his manners as an envoy

had been censured as stiff, but never as incorrect or discourteous; yet, as Cobenzl had said of him to Metternich, he was a man better fitted to meditate under an old pear tree on the Markowitz estates than to fill subordinate positions in diplomacy. "In a foremost position," Cobenzl had added, "you might get much out of him."

Irritated by Johann's bearing, who in making this retort had not even looked at him, Kessling now took up the reference to Prussia.

"Vienna should be an example to Berlin, you say? What has Prussia done since Jena except truckle to Bonaparte? And you know as well as the rest of us what price at Tilsit the lovely Louisa was willing to pay for Magdeburg. She offered the Corsican a rose: the rose was her royal self!"

Johann, again without looking at Kessling, said contemptuously:

"It is a calumny, that Magdeburg story—Bonaparte's or another's."

Nevertheless, this was the version of it that was accepted in Vienna, and Johann knew it. A Habsburg, the Grandduchess of Tuscany, Marie Leopolda, had sealed it with her approval.

"After all," Bolli said, intervening, "this Bonaparte makes things hum. We were yawning ourselves to death when here comes this son of a Corsican attorney and squats himself down on the throne of the oldest dynasty in Europe. And keeps there! What? Is not that something? He is barely forty, yet year in, year out, these last fifteen, he has beaten a Romanoff or a Hohenzollern, a Brunswick, a Bourbon or a Habsburg, in battle after battle. And if Germany or Europe will not fight him it must serve him."

"There I am with you!" Johann said with sudden energy. "If Germany will not fight him she must serve him; by God, and Europe also! Yes, a world only fit for Bonaparte should have for its tyrant a Bonaparte."

Bolli, Kessling, and an official named Freihoff leaned forward simultaneously to answer.

But Lan-Lan anticipated all three.

"Come here, Johann, and talk to Toc and me. What is the matter with you? Amongst Russian bears does one grow like a bear?" she said, looking up into his darkening features. "Now listen to me. I am going to this parade, not to do homage to the French Emperor, but simply because I am bored indoors, and because I feel well, and because the morning is fine and the autumn woods glorious. As for Bonaparte, I go to see him exactly as I would go to see the automatic chess-player: each is a curiosity."

She referred to the invention of Metzel, then notorious—a figure in wood dressed like a Turk which sat before a chess-board and challenged and invariably defeated all who cared to play.

"Toc feels just the same," Lan-Lan went on, "so does Amalie, so does Nusschen. And," she concluded with feminine illogicalness, "we are going to the masked ball to-night and therefore cannot shirk the parade this morning. Why do you look at me like that?"

"To see how one folly breeds another," was the answer on Count Johann's lips; but he masked it under an ironic smile and merely bowed ceremoniously.

"The automatic chess-player? Your Serenity has said the word. You will permit me to withdraw from this exalted company? I have to see Count Andréossy at eleven."

Andréossy, Napoleon's ambassador, first to England, then to Austria, was now governor of the captured city. Towards the Viennese public, he affected an overbearing and harsh manner; but he was the secret friend and adviser of many of the great families and took a malicious if dissembled pleasure in their coarsest as well as in their most pungent and refined caricatures of Napoleon. Sprung

from the smaller nobility of Languedoc, Andréossy found in Vienna a life and a society which appealed at once to his pleasure-loving southern temper and to the snobbism always latent in men of his rank.

II

Count Johann had indeed an appointment with Andréossy, but this morning also he wished to get away from the habitués of the Palazzo Esterthal. Behind Bolli's argument he heard, or seemed to hear, thousands, millions of voices in the hubbub of a staccato discordant chorus proclaiming, "Great is Napoleon, great, great, great! He has done something. He has made things hum." Johann's own deep moral nature was outraged by this admiration for success, the success, he believed, of a man essentially ordinary, secured, not by genius, but by craft, rough soldiership and bloody violence; for in another sense than that of the priests and priest-ridden societies, he thought of Napoleon as "Antichrist"—the actual living promulgator of a new ethic, antagonistic in every point to that of Galilee.

"Marat too did something," he said savagely, "so did St. Just and Robespierre, and so did Ivan the Terrible and the Hospidar Vlad Dracul. And they were in their nature and in their right. If we would not have demi-devils make things hum, we must make things hum ourselves. But, being Germans, this we shall never do, never!"

On the other hand Johann reasoned, nearly every man of Bolli's set, including Kessling, had gone to the front. Two had fallen at Ratisbon; at Aspern and at Wagram five had been wounded. Again, though Bolli's debts were heavy and though he was reckless at the gaming-table as on the duelling-ground, had he not out of his own purse helped to maintain Count Purgstall's regiment, seven hundred strong, of whom not more than fifty had ever seen their Styrian

fields again? Finally, unlike his greatest friend, the poet Heinrich von Rentzdorf, unlike Johann himself, Bolli had in him a touch of authentic military talent. In February he had communicated his own plan of campaign to the War Office. Part of it coincided with the design for a march upon Paris; but it had in it an important modification of that design, characterized by a judge in these matters as "une idée vraiment Napoléonienne." The Archduke had thrown the paper on the fire and by that act, it was said amongst Bolli's following, he had burned the glory of Austria. But Bolli knew better muttering to himself "Thank God" each time he thought of the Archduke's action.

As Johann turned to leave the room Toc darted to his side and taking his arm said in Polish, "You are not going? You cannot go. Why are you putting this affront on me?"

She spoke in a low guttural voice. Her anger and her pain added to the resplendence of her eyes.

"What have I done?" she pleaded.

"Nothing, Toc, nothing. I am not myself to-day. What have you to do this afternoon?"

"I wish to speak to you now—*now*," she whispered. "I must speak with you."

He wavered, gnawing his underlip.

"It is impossible," he said at length. "This business with Andréossy is imperative. It is about the guard for this accursed ball amongst other things."

"Ah, here is Meisner," Toc exclaimed, seizing this excuse to detain him.

Etienne Meisner, the old Count Esterthal's physician, approached, bowing to the princess. He was a shortish square-built man of fifty, with pale hair, light blue eyes, cleanliness, health, an almost Spartan simplicity in dress and manners. He was a Swiss, but had been trained in Paris and before settling in Vienna had fought in the Revolution wars.

"Good-morning, doctor," Toc said. "How is the padrino? He can go with us to the parade?"

"Padrino" was the pet name of the old count.

Johann, returning the doctor's bow coldly, stood watching Toc's face, her quick gestures and her smiles. Her teeth were irregular, as though she had been wilful in her childhood; but her smile, the velvet smoothness of her brow, the glow in her dark eyes, made of this defect a charm.

The princess's familiarity with the doctor grated on Count Johann; but it was Toc's way. She seemed to forget her rank with just those men and women in whose society Count Johann would most have wished her to remember her rank.

"Yes," he muttered, "I love her, but I shall never understand her."

He never had understood her he argued moodily; not when at eighteen, just after her father's death in battle, she had first come to Vienna, a vision of sorrow, seduction and romance; not when, in answer to his passionate adoration, she had affianced herself to him; not when, at the end of four months of the strangest happiness, she had broken her troth and, as the bride of Prince Dürrenstein, had written to him less than a week after her marriage, "Everything will be the same between us, everything! Dearest, my dearest, how I love you now! And in five weeks from Tuesday next I shall see you again! You will still be in Vienna? You will wait for me?"

He had not waited twenty-four hours. This incredible perversity, outraging every moral instinct, aggravated the wound in his heart. The thunderous march of the French legions from Boulogne had given him distraction, and in the campaign of 1805, and immediately afterwards as a volunteer with the Russians, he had sought and found a temporary oblivion. She had written to him repeatedly;

marriage, she protested, had merely shown her the power and tenacity of her love for him. "I am wretched, most wretched." Then, stung by his silence or furious upbraidings, she had ceased to write.

Suddenly, a year and a half ago, in the spring of 1808, a new and disturbing problem had confronted him—the death of Prince Dürrenstein at Ostrolenka during the plague that the war had left.

Meanwhile riches had come to Johann himself. An eccentric uncle, a fanatical Josephinist, attracted by his character and repelled by the pedantry of Johann's elder brother, had made him master of a wide tract of mining country in Styria. But everything had come too late: to Toc, her knowledge of herself; to him, his riches and his lands. Yet his infatuation was cureless.

"At her worst," he thought now, surveying her nervous perverse grace, "she is the best thing on earth to me. The power to wish for something strongly enough to will death rather than lose it—she wakens in me that power. I should be worse than a fool to let her go."

Nevertheless, he had undertaken the mission to Petersburg in order to be away from her, to have the leisure to think freely, untroubled by the hypnotism of her presence.

A quick stir and greetings and exclamations at the foot of the north staircase made everyone look in that direction.

It was the old Count Esterthal, followed by Patzsch, his body-servant, carrying plaids and a rug.

Count Esterthal was at this period a man of seventy-two; he stooped, but his features and bearing had an alert and vigorous expression. His thin pale hooked nose emerged between two vivid German steel-blue eyes; his lips were tightly closed, but in the company of children or the young a smile played about them willingly.

No man in Austria had felt his country's humiliation more poignantly. To the Habsburgs he had in his youth

devoted something of that chivalrous loyalty which the Stuarts extorted from the Cavaliers. The triumphs of the French Revolutionists were to Count Esterthal what the triumph of a slave-revolt might have been to a Sulla or an Appius Claudius. He saw in Bonaparte simply the energetic leader of gangs of serfs, the brigand chief of a hideous brood which had burst from the cellars and ergastula in whose fetid darkness they were meant by nature to waste and pine in chains.

The second occupation of Vienna by Napoleon had found the old Count withdrawn from politics as from the army, tormented by illness, impatience and life-disgust; and a prisoner in his room; and though known to be an *intransigeant*, he had applied to Andréossy to intercede with the "brigand" that he might be permitted to remain in the city, and that the house in which Esterthal had succeeded Esterthal for two hundred years—soldiers, councillors, churchmen, ardent supporters of Leopold I. or the open antagonists of Joseph II.—might be free from the pollution of the murderers of Marie Antoinette as its uninvited guests.

Andréossy had made the intercession in person; and, exaggerating the old Count's illness, he had excited Napoleon's magnanimity.

"Esterthal? Esterthal?" Bonaparte had cried. "Tiens, I remember that name." And a misty morning on the banks of the Pieve had risen before his memory. "He was at Rivoli, a general of division, was he not? And at the Tagliamento? I remember. C'est un brave," he had concluded sententiously, and, pleased at this reminiscence of his first dazzling victories, he had, after two or three pointed questions, granted the petition. A special courier, however, had overtaken Andréossy on his way back to the city, bearing the stipulation that Count Ferdinand Esterthal, one of the associates of the Archduke Maximilian,

"the firebrand of Vienna," was to give his parole neither to remain in Vienna nor visit his father's house until the peace was signed.

Bonaparte's memory had served him right. In 1797 Count Esterthal, then a "Field-marshal lieutenant," or major-general commanding a division, had negotiated the preliminaries of Leoben.

On the old Count's entrance Johann turned at once to Toc.

"I shall see you this afternoon, then?" he enquired, taking her hand as in farewell.

"Yes," she said faintly; "if you must go now. Come at three."

He made his way to Count Esterthal, seated in the shadow of the huge staircase and surrounded by a small crowd of acquaintances or sycophants. Count Esterthal drew him at once into the embrasure of the window.

"Well?" he said with a keen glance into the younger man's face.

"Nothing," the latter answered with a guarded look around. "Liechtenstein and Bubna have an interview this morning. I am going to headquarters now. I fear the worst."

"What will be, will be. Che sarà sarà."

The two stood silent for some seconds, then the old man walked with him to the door.

"We can talk better outside."

They had scarcely gone when down the heavily carved staircase a woman's figure appeared.

Her plain dress amid the brilliant colouring of the guests, her bare head amid the hats, toques and ostrich plumes, the nobility and ease of her walk as she came forward, exchanging handshakes in the English fashion with the guests, astonished and charmed the most careless observer.

It was Amalie von Esterthal, wife of the Ferdinand

Albrecht whom Bonaparte had so pointedly excluded from Vienna and from his father's house. She seemed about the same age as Toc and Lan-Lan. Her walk, the symmetries of her figure, drew every eye to the face, almost in fear lest some feature less enchanting than that form should disappoint the sight; and if the usual exclamations, "How classic! How Greek!" were heard around her, it was because in a sophisticated society this had become the stereotyped phrase for great and arresting beauty. Her figure was certainly Greek in its proportions and her bearing and walk had great freedom—in a word, that poise or balance which sculptors at that period were beginning to admire from castes and drawings of the Parthenon.

"You enter like some beautiful theme in a symphony," Toc murmured, taking her towards the south window where she had stood with Johann. "Your eyes are full of happy thoughts. You have heard from Rentzdorf? The sunlight on your mouth betrays you. It is a rose of paradise."

Amalie looked at the flushed features and sparkling eyes.

"Dearest Toc, what has excited you? Do I come too soon or too late? I thought Johann was here?"

She referred to the immediate prospect of a betrothal of the Princess and Count Johann Markowitz.

"I cannot explain to you here. Where can we talk? I am wretched."

The young Countess, accustomed as she was to Toc's varying temper, saw that her emotion was, if extravagant, sincere.

"Go to my room," she said after a second's deliberation. "I will join you immediately. We do not start for quite an hour." She glanced at a clock that rose beside some armour and a stand full of antique boar-spears. "Ah," she exclaimed, flushing in turn, but with anger, "who has committed this folly? And to-day of all days!"

The heavy crimson curtain of the northern window,

which for the past four months had by her express orders hung half-drawn, had been thrown back, disclosing the shattered pilasters and carvings of the adjoining balcony. It was the work of a shell thrown from Vienna itself during the bombardment in April last. The old Count had refused to have the balcony repaired, yet whenever he saw it, he burst into one of those rages which were a misery to the whole household.

She called the major-domo, glanced in the direction of the curtain and turned once more to her friend.

"Forgive me, dear Toc. Fritz, who looks after this room, is still with the Landwehr."

"What is it?" Toc asked bewildered. "How, your face looks cruel—no, Roman, Lombard, menacing anyhow"—searching for a word. "You will come quickly? Do not let Lan-Lan or Nusschen keep you." She disappeared up the narrow south stair.

Amalie's intervention in the matter of the curtain was just in time. A minute later the old Count appeared in the doorway. He was accompanied by a little neatly dressed man with a shining bald head, with busy lines about the mouth, but an agreeable smile. This was the famous Councillor of Mines, Count Prostkeiya, Lan-Lan's husband.

Bolli, his face a mask, sat down beside Kessling. At the other end of the room Amalie rejoined padrino, who was now standing with Baron Freihoff and his two daughters, twins, both dressed in the soft semi-transparent muslins then the fashion in Vienna, which alternately revealed and hid the outlines of their fresh young figures. The two girls, blushing and smiling at Amalie's kindness, kept breaking into little spurts of childish talk. One had a stammer, the other a lisp, and both seemed very inexperienced and gawky beside the upright grace of Nusschen, who was two years younger.

"Our fellows are useless in attack," said a young officer

of Jägers, looking now at the Count, now at Freihoff; "and on a march a shower of rain dispirits a division."

"I must beg of you to except Liechtenstein's troopers," Freihoff said. "They are as good as the French. We have learnt half Bonaparte's game already. We will beat him in time!"

And in the official's arid tones the names of Steininger, Smola and Oldenberg-Orsini began to collide rapidly with those of Hiller, Bellegarde, Kinsky and Schwartzenberg—heroes or quasi-heroes of the campaign. But the old Count's harsh laugh interrupted this official verbosity.

"Yes, next time! Next time! Immer das alte Lied! Ever the same old song! I have heard it sung in Austria these fifty years."

He spoke the truth. It was the word which had been used to palliate Austria's defeats under Daun and under Loudon in her wars against Frederick the Great; it was the word he had heard used to salve her diplomatic checks under Joseph II.; it was the word he had heard used after Valmy in 1792 and after the world-historic repulse of Coburg in 1793. He had heard it again in '94, '95 and '96, and now after Wagram, as nine years ago after Marengo and four years ago after Ulm and Austerlitz, it was reiterated as cheerfully and complacently as ever.

The Jäger, an enthusiastic young soldier, turned to Amalie.

"You saw the French armies enter Vienna, did you not, each man with a hunk of meat or bread on his bayonet point—trim, clean little beggars, with not a superfluous hair on their heads? When once our fellows . . . I beg your pardon," he said, interrupting himself, and, imagining that he had started a topic dangerous to the old Count's temper, he turned in the direction of her glance.

A little smiling old lady, in the elaborate head-gear of Maria Theresa's days, had come gliding out of the dusk of

the great north staircase. She threatened with her fan Bolli and Kessling, she blew a kiss to Amalie, then to Nusschen; her faded eyes beamed with intelligent pleasure and self-satisfaction; but, as everyone in the room knew, she probably was ascribing to each a name or a personality that was not his own or not her own. One day she would mistake Bolli for her eldest son, dead fifteen years ago; another day she would mistake Amalie for the latter's sister, Ulrica, who was in a convent at Prague; or she would confound the doctor or a chance visitor with the younger Count Esterthal, Ferdinand Albrecht.

The little old lady was Count Esterthal's elder sister. She now stopped right in the middle of the room. Her lips parted in a fixed smile, showing the false yellowish underteeth.

"Whom does she take us for to-day?" Kessling asked with obstreperous gaiety.

Bolli made no answer, but under his lowered eyelids watched the melancholy scene, afflicting at once to the sight and to the judgment. The entrance of Lan-Lan's husband had fronted him suddenly with the ugliness and the reality of things, and the sight of her figure in all its exotic grace seated beside the trim, carefully dressed Councillor of Mines sharpened the bitterness of the impression.

"Mon Dieu," he thought, "la vie humaine! Napoleon and his marshals out there at Schönbrunn heap up glory or heap up gold, whilst Time, inexorable Time, turns all to a derision, just as it has turned this woman's face to a grinning mask! But the mad world-dance goes on, aimless as life is, aimless as love is, aimless as God is and all God's creatures!"

"Whom does she take us for to-day?" Kessling repeated, for he had the rich parvenu's self-conceit and took umbrage at Bolli's abstractedness.

"As if I knew," Bolli answered. "Monkeys from Potsdam or Daun and his staff."

But to the astonishment of everyone the old Maid of Honour walked straight to Lan-Lan and began to talk merrily to Count Prostkeiya. And in a minute or two she was speaking to Lan-Lan herself as though she were the Archduchess Maria Christina, dead these seven years, and laid to rest in Canova's rococo-classic monument.

"All Her Majesty's daughters are good and kind; oh, my dear, so carefully trained, as for Holy Church itself." Her words became low, broken, solemn, disconnected ejaculations.

Bolli thought of the histories of those daughters of Maria Theresa—the hideous cloud of truth or calumny that year by year thickened round their reputations—Marie Antoinette, Marie Carolina, Marie Josepha.

"What a satire upon Holy Church, and that careful training! Bah, this is God's planet, not mine, and He must run His show in His own way."

III

Amalie, on escaping to her rooms on the first floor, did not at once find Toc. She lingered a minute in her boudoir, charmed by the sudden stillness, the soft perfumes, and by the subdued light falling on its costly furnishings, sofas, cabinets and rare vases, books and sombre hangings.

But the sound of her maid's voice speaking in Italian and Toc's laughing replies in the same language came to her from her bedroom.

The spectacle which there met her amused and amazed her. It was no longer the desperate woman that had quitted her downstairs. The Princess Dürrenstein, in her bodice and underskirt, her arms and sloping shoulders bare, stood bending forwards to an oval mirror, carefully

pencilling her eyebrows. Her gown had been flung on a chair: her plumed hat and veil lay on the bed. On the dressing-table everything was in confusion; the lids of rouge and carmine pots, perfume bottles, brushes, the crystal, porcelain, ivory and silver of the toilet-service—all were mixed pell-mell. Tita, Amalie's maid, a flush on her face, the curls loosened on her forehead, stood behind the impetuous visitant, her left arm burdened with various articles of clothing—Toc's cashmere shawl, a scarf of Alençon lace; and on her right a cloak, in which Amalie recognized a fur capote of her own, sent from Mersan's two days ago.

"En plein vice!" Toc cried. "Caught red-handed."

She wheeled round and, making her petticoats swirl like a ballerina's, she threw one slender and exquisitely neat foot in front of the other in rapid alternation.

"But where did you get this capote? You will wear it to-day? You must, you must! Bonaparte cannot stand a shawl, even on Josephine, and I want him to see that Vienna can turn out as elegant figures as Paris—and faces a myriad times more lovely!" And she dabbed her freshly carmined lips on Amalie's cheek.

"Allons! Let me try it on once more," she said to the maid.

Her eyes flashing, her lips fixed in a smile of excited pleasure, she slipped again into the coat and began to walk to and fro in front of the mirror, eyeing herself now sideways, now in face, now twisting her fine, slender neck to see her back.

"It is too large for her Highness," Tita said to her mistress. "I told Madame la Princess, this, but she is so —so irresistible."

"I cannot make it out," Toc exclaimed, stamping her foot. "Your things are always newer and more *chic* than Lan-Lan's or mine, yet she has ten thousand a year for

dress and my own *nota* three weeks ago came to 6342 exactly. Hein, what do you really spend? Do you bribe Mersan in secret? Or is it favouritism?"

"Neither the one nor the other, dear Toc. It is simply thinking a little."

Toc with a shrug turned again to the glass, balancing herself and thrusting out one after the other her slim but deliciously modelled hips. The coat would not hang. She drew it off petulantly.

"There you stand, you superb one, and give never a thought to your own perfections; whilst I, I would give a mine in Styria to have shoulders like yours, that waist, and the rest of you." Tita aided the princess to dress and, taking the capote with her, left the room.

IV

Left alone, the two women, each sunk in her own thoughts, walked once or twice to and fro the large room, the scents from the roses and heliotrope outside mingling with the definite perfumes that at that date hung about every fashionable woman's bedroom. On a table near the window stood a Sèvres vase and some miniatures. One was Amalie's mother; another showed the long but handsome and intellectual features of Prince John of Liechtenstein, Rentzdorf's commander and the most brilliant cavalry leader of Austria, and, after Murat and Ziethen, perhaps the most brilliant of modern times.

"You see how Johann requites my forbearance," Toc suddenly burst out, releasing her arm and throwing herself into a low chair. "These three days have been a continuous torture. I have asked him to explain; but he says nothing. I have offered every atonement; but still he says nothing. Yesterday I forced him to go with me to matins. I gave him the blessed water, but he would not

give it me in return. He refused to kneel beside me; he would neither pray with me nor for me."

"But, dearest Toc," Amalie remonstrated, "why did you do anything so—foolish?"

Toc looked at her.

"What is there foolish in wishing to kneel in the Holy of Holies beside the man you love and intend to marry? Oh, yes; I know what his brother says of us: 'Watches that never show the same hour.' But he is wrong. Johann and I—we were made for each other. Long, long, long ago I knew it. True, Johann does not believe in Rome; he does not believe in Christ. What does that matter? I believe in both; and for him I am willing to risk my salvation. I love him. I love him."

Amalie had a return of her impatient mood, but she said nothing, silently caressing Toc's hair. At length she said to Toc gently:

"But this morning—what did you and Johann do?"

"This morning?" the Princess answered, lifting her small tormented features. "It seems so long ago. What was I wearing? I can always remember in that way. Ah, I recollect. I was in black. We rode together round the ramparts. St. Stephen's bells were in full chime. I demanded straight out why yesterday he had acted in so cruel a way, and whether he had ceased believing in God."

"Well, and what did he say to that?" Amalie urged smiling, though her eyes filmed at Toc's naïve almost childlike earnestness.

"What did he say? Sitting firm on his horse he looked at me sideways, up and down, then answered, 'Yes, I am a Christian, Toc, in my own way; that is, if it be Christian to love your enemies and do ill to your friends. Even there, of course, I cannot presume to rival my brother in devotion, and still less you ladies of Vienna in fervour where a French officer is concerned.' That was his answer

and he struck my horse with his whip and sent me careering on in front. He wanted to kill me. And I should not have minded a bit had I been thrown and killed on the spot."

"And afterwards—what did you do?"

"Nothing wise. When he overtook me, I said to him, 'You ought to love me, Johann, for you do ill to me enough to make me think I am your dearest friend.' He was nicer after that. He said that in Russia he had been studying the Slav nature; that he hoped by and by to comprehend it, especially as it unfolds itself in the hearts of Polish women. Then he said in quite an odd voice, 'Well, at your worst you are better than the best, Toc: by God, yes; the sweetest, greatest thing on earth to me.' All the same, a quarter of an hour later, he left me at my door like a dog that in pity he had taken for a run." She began to tear at her lace handkerchief with her small, white, but irregular teeth.

"I am so wretched, so wretched. I ask myself a thousand times—why has this come upon me? But there is never an answer. My broken engagement, I am told, was my destruction. But how was I to know? No one warned me: no one dissuaded me. Johann himself congratulated me. I thought I was doing the best thing for myself and the best thing for him. He was poor. He habitually spoke despitefully of women and of marriage. I thought it would be just the same with Johann afterwards. I wrote that to him on my honeymoon. How I hate him and hate myself now when I remember! I could kill myself with mortification or kill him."

It was not the depravity of the confession which startled Amalie—she was too much a Viennese, too little of a hypocrite; it was the sadness of life, of all life; it was the pain that this man and this woman had brought on each other, the pain they were yet to bring on each other.

"It is Vienna," Toc went on. "In Warsaw I was not like this. But I will make him suffer. When it is too late he will regret me. The dead are always valued."

Shiverings like those of a fever traversed her body. Then with an abrupt change of mood—

"No; I will not weep. I have humiliated myself enough. The villain! I have but to drop my glove and ten of the best men in Austria spring to pick it up. 'The Princess Dürrenstein's glove!' I could have them tear each other for that glove or for the stalks of the grapes I have eaten."

And with hectic cheeks and hot eyes she made a pirouette, advancing with mincing steps, then retreating, holding up her skirts to show her charming ankles and shapely calves.

"Ja, ich bin es, bin es, bin es,
Bin Prinzessin Dürrenstein!"

It was her own parody of the refrain sung by the hawkers of Tyrolese wood-carving and used with dubious success long afterwards by Grillparzer in one of the most tragic scenes of his most famous drama.

Then, kissing her hands, she made as it were a triumphant exit.

"Do you think me crazy? Dearest, dearest, speak to me. Advise me. To you I will listen. One thing only: I cannot give him up again. Never, never! I will be anything to him, mistress or wife or sister, but I must have him. The Blessed Sacrament is less to me."

She knelt, pressing herself against Amalie like a younger against an elder sister.

"Marriage is the lesser evil, Toc."

"The lesser evil!" came the passionate cry. "Oh, is there then nothing that is good in life? Is it all evil? How terribly you speak. Yet you are right. I did not think thus formerly. It is Vienna. It is Daruka. I cannot, cannot stand both his cruelty and his inconstancy."

"Be reasonable, Toc. You know Johann's character."

Daruka was the Princess Ternitchsky, a Circassian married to the scion of a great Viennese family. Amalie pointed out that Johann's assiduities synchronized with Toc's own flightiness and her flirtation with Montesquiou, one of Napoleon's aides.

"It is Vienna," Toc muttered in a kind of wanton despair. "Life itself is holy, good and pure. It is this city that is evil."

"Dear Toc," Amalie said with a shrug, "you will find a Vienna everywhere. Besides," she went on in a gentler voice, "of what use is it to be jealous of Daruka? The man was never born who could look on Daruka and not desire her. The terrestrial Venus—the Venus of the streets—Daruka is that thing. You might as well be jealous of the woman who kisses your lover in his sleep."

"You—do you think like that about—Rentzdorf?"

Amalie answered steadily though with averted eyes—"Yes, I think like that about Heinrich."

There was so strange, so sweet a music in her voice that Toc started back ashamed as before some shrine which she had approached.

"And that is woman's life? That is all life—now and in the past? It is frightful; it is frightful. It is Vienna, its rivalries, its balls, its ostentation, its extravagance, its art, its music—everything that made me marry Prince Dürrenstein! Oh, I know it now, my perdition! At Warsaw I dreamed of a lover who, though miles and miles away, yes, and in the company of the most seductive women, would see my image only."

Amalie got up, worn out, leaving the Princess crouched together by the sofa. But, constraining herself, she answered:

"Dearest Toc, Count Johann loves you if man ever loved woman. He certainly is not like your ideal; for this

that you name your ideal is not only a mere phantasy, but a stupid phantasy. You might as well say, 'I will not have fingernails, because they hint at claws; or I will not have a single hair on the back of my hand, because it hints the beast,' as to wish for a lover like this block of wood, your ideal."

"Amalie! How horrible you are!"

"You force me to be horrible."

"I force you? How?"

"By your Warsaw view of life; by your cult of the Slav temperament; by all that superficial ideality of yours, confusing the thing *you* desire with the thing that *is* and ought to be! Instead of looking steadily at the thing which *is* until it is penetrated and transfigured by the thing you desire it to be, you say excitedly, 'The thing I see is the thing I wish.' Then comes the awakening. Dear Toc, it is the history of Poland, and you know it. If you marry Johann to-morrow," she continued, "he will meet women like Daruka; you will meet men like M. de Montesquiou. Purity, passion, the body, the soul, the senses—it is all more mysterious than we think, Toc. There are thoughts we keep back from those we love most dearly. Hourly we lie to ourselves; hourly we dissemble. And this is everlastingly right. *C'est la vie.* It is right that we should be compelled to obliterate thoughts just as we are compelled to obliterate old bad hidden things in our ancestral past. Our life is as our thoughts are; yet neither our thoughts nor their consequences are within our power. To that perpetual cry of yours, 'To whom can I show myself exactly as I am; tell everything, everything?' I answer,—Certainly not to Johann; nor to any man. Not even to me; not even to yourself."

Amalie stopped.

"To God," she heard Toc whispering; "oh, I tell all to my God."

"You mean in the confessional?".

Toc nodded.

"You never do," Amalie answered in a moved voice. "You never do. You forget I too was once a Catholic, and know. Never, I say, never! No woman ever yet confessed *all* to a man. Our confessions," she said with a singular laugh, "are like our coiffures, arranged by the invisible lady's maid of the soul."

Toc shivered. She felt miserable, weak, suffering.

"Dear Toc," Amalie went on, speaking now in a low friendly voice, "I say all this to you because you are confronted by two roads, one leading to disaster. You say, this is Vienna—well, I say again, the suburbs of the actual Vienna are spacious, but of this Vienna of yours, the suburbs are wide as the world."

Toc in an instant was on her knees beside her.

"You great, beautiful, high-souled, dear, dear Amalie! I was a demon when I came into this room; and now—an angel I am not, nor ever will be; but you, I think, are near the angels, and I, I am near you. I must be alone to think, to think! Where can I go? Round the garden—under the cedars? No; I will drive home and back."

Downstairs, Toc found the company, still more augmented, hotly engaged in attacking or defending the authenticity of an anecdote told by Lan-Lan on the authority of Madame Raspogli. Napoleon's sister Pauline, Princess Borghese, Madame Raspogli had averred, was addicted to the vice or the extravagance of milk baths which cost a guinea each; and to heighten the *bizarrerie* of this taste she was, the same authority had affirmed, carried to the bath by a favourite negro named Delmar.

"The mameluk! The mameluk!" Kessling cried excitedly almost as Toc entered the throng. "Why have I not thought of it before?"

"Thought of what?" Lan-Lan asked.

"Rustum—Bonaparte's mameluk, who commits his murders for him, like the private assassin of the Borgias. The murders are an intelligible service; but why does he keep him as his valet? Not till this moment have I known."

"Well, what is the reason?"

"Why, to carry him to his bath—a family taste, a Bonapartist idiosyncrasy! It is glorious."

There was a shout of laughter.

The younger twin blushed, the elder said, "Disgraceful!" and looked death at her sister.

The steady tolling of a bell outside got on Toc's nerves even more jarringly than Vienna's risky stories. It sounded like a deathbell.

"The Church of the Capuchins," she thought suddenly. "Let me go there. I can reflect and pray. God will illumine me."

V

Unlike the Princess Dürrenstein, who was a pure Slav, Amalie von Esterthal was, by the mixture of her blood and the discordant traditions in her descent, a typical Viennese.

On her mother's side she was Italian, tracing her origin to the Ranieri, a fanatical Guelf house, which, banished from Arezzo in the fourteenth century, had settled in Lombardy and by enterprise or war had gradually become possessors of wide tracts of grudging or fertile land in the neighbourhood of Monza. Her father, on the other hand, was of a South German stock and drew his name and descent from the Counts of Hildenfeldt in Suabia. Dispossessed during the Thirty Years' War, the branch to which he belonged had been restored to comparative affluence by Leopold I.; and, thrust again into the background under Charles VI., had re-emerged under Maria Theresa and her successors. Two of Amalie's great-aunts

had been maids of honour to the empress-queen; her father in his youth had entered the famous Harrach Guard; of her brothers, two were in the Austrian service; a third was equerry to the Queen of Naples, Maria Carolina, Amalie's godmother; a fourth was a priest. Her only sister, Ulrica, five years her senior, had at nineteen adopted the religious life and was now in the convent of the Ursulines at Prague.

Amalie herself was now in her twenty-eighth year. Of these years the first fifteen had been passed in an almost conventual seclusion at Monza; the next seven partly in Austria and partly in Naples and Palermo at the court of Maria Carolina; the last six in Vienna.

A patrician in the widest as in the narrowest sense of that term, she seemed by her birth, vigorous health and conspicuous beauty preappointed to a life of outward brilliance or luxurious calm. Her marriage with Ferdinand von Esterthal had been a "love" marriage. It stimulated her senses and satisfied her pride. He was good-looking; he was young, and apparently her slave; he was by his friendship with the Archduke Maximilian one of the most envied officers of the Guard.

Suddenly this fabric of peace and illusionary joys dissolved.

In the same week and almost on the same day she received the news of her mother's death, and discovered that her husband had for an indefinite time been false to her, that he had now as mistresses two of her closest friends, one, her brother's wife, Lucille von Hildenfeldt, the other, his own cousin, Marie von Esterthal.

It was as if a thunder-bolt had struck her to the ground.

In the days and weeks of suffering and perplexity of heart which ensued, of sorrow for her mother's death, of perplexity before her own fierce humiliation, she had to face alone the problems assailing her spirit—the central problem above all, long shunned and now thus suddenly

and terribly unmasked—"What art thou that with brute power hast fashioned the worlds in agony and now hurlest on me this anguish?"

Untutored by suffering, hate and the lust for retaliation had for a time engrossed her thoughts; nor was it until the opportunity of a fearful vengeance offered itself that she recoiled in horror from the mad craving to make her insulters suffer. It was against herself that her hate now gathered. It was against herself that the murderous instinct was directed.

But again when, she watched the frail, spiritual grace of her sister-in-law, Lucille von Hildenfeldt, she had put the question—"Can treachery and murder have lodgment in that form? Can it be evil, the desire which one so fair can feel? Wrong and sin? Oh, this world is but one great wrong, and sin is the only reality; good, the dream. Woman's innocence? Was there ever a time when I myself have been innocent?"

And she saw now that it was not their guilt; it was their imagined bliss that was the arrow quivering in her side.

A reconciliation patched up by the intervention of the Queen had left her rancour unappeased. "Win back your husband's love," her confessor had pleaded. "You have the traditions of your mother's house to guard."

"Yes," she had reflected to herself in scornful irony, "let me be a good wife, since a mother I cannot be. And yet why? Why should I win back this man's love whom I despise and loathe? Amalie von Hildenfeldt, the girl who loved Ferdinand von Esterthal, is dead. Would I, the woman, indeed remarry with this well-born jockey and dog-trainer? Is this indeed God's high command?"

All around her was lampless darkness; the law of conduct had sunk with the faith from which it was derived. How was a false religion to beget in human conduct anything save hypocrisy or a false law? Living in conjugal "peace,"

consenting to her own degradation amid her friends' approval, she was, she told herself, striving to find a place with the Egyptian in that obscene Malebolge of Dante.

In 1804 she returned to Vienna in a state of mind bordering upon madness. Her married life had become a daily contamination, but from this she was now determined at any cost to liberate herself.

The intercession of "padrino," her father-in-law, prevented a scandal. He had been her mother's friend and Amalie had formed a strong attachment to the lonely old man. Her own father lived in seclusion dedicated to her mother's memory, passing the days and nights, it was said, in abstruse studies of alchemy and astrology. Divorce, despite the laws of Joseph II., was in Austria confined as yet to the middle classes. A suite of rooms in the left wing of the Palazzo was allotted to herself; the right wing to Ferdinand; the public apartments and those of the old Count occupied the remainder of the house.

VI

"My life is ended," she wrote in her diary, "and my life is not begun. I have not known an hour of happiness which I have not proved to be an illusion or founded on a lie. The vain successes at the Court, dress, jewels, the Opera, the theatre, balls, court fêtes, admiration, envy, pride, my marriage, religion, the 'peace of the soul' at Monza and at Naples—what have these been except the creations of a lie or a dream? I was born into a false religion, trained to worship a false God. I made for myself a false world and in it found false friends, false joys, false thoughts, false everything."

She was a woman to whom religion was necessary if she were to live; but her intellect, at once exalted and darkened by her suffering, had as yet led her only to denial. Never-

theless, she had unawares taken the first step towards that vision of things which she afterwards found in Rentzdorf's dramas.

"Life is meaningless," she wrote, "yet live on! Life is suffering, and beyond this earth there is nothing; yet live on!" Why? Pressing that question she was pressing towards the light.

Unpretentious, and, considering her education and her environment, singularly free from affectation and class prejudices, exquisitely sensitive to beauty, she was yet denied alike the ambitions of art and of social rivalries which made life a sort of noisy self-complacent phantasmagoria to several of her contemporaries—to Bettina, for instance, to Rahel, to Caroline Schlegel and to Mariamne vom Stein.

Rejecting the religion of Christ—which as a kind of Austrian Jansenism she found in Vienna, in the Markowitz circle above all—she nevertheless adopted its ethics.

"Let me live for others."

She gave her days to the philanthropies and to the "causes" that were fashionable in the first decade of the nineteenth century, quickly discovering, with a humour not wholly bitter, their organized imposture and innate contradiction. "You say the rich pursue phantoms and shadows," she said to Count Markowitz, "but is not the struggle of the poor for bread as phantasmal as the struggle of the rich for pleasure?"

Round her, the falling of thrones, the tramp of Bonaparte's legions and the monotonous thunder of his cannon seemed a not unfitting accompaniment to her moody days.

VII

It was in this state of mind and in the Markowitz circle that for the first time she heard the name and became acquainted with the poetry of Heinrich von Rentzdorf.

At Monza, with her mother or alone, she had read much in Italian; but at Naples and in Palermo after her marriage she had read nothing. Now, in Vienna, as German gradually became as easy to her as Italian, she turned in avid curiosity or enthusiasm towards that blossoming-time of poetry and thought known as the *Aufklärung*. Herder, Lessing, Jacobi, Schiller, Zacharias Werner—their works became stars in a wider newer firmament of the soul.

Heinrich von Rentzdorf, who was still quite young, had at first escaped her observation; but when his dramas were once in her hands, she divined in him a genius more akin to Goethe's than to that of any of his contemporaries. His ideas, like those of Goethe, came, as it were, from a distance; and his verses, like Goethe's were impregnated with a magic or a mystery borrowed from remoter twilights than ours. He had Goethe's passion for the German language. He handled each word as if it were itself a poem, the achievement of some unknown but perfect artist. "The quarries at Carrara used to tremble when they heard the footstep of Buonarroti," the young critic and littérateur, Axel Petersen, had written in the *Mercure de Vienne*, "so, I imagine, does a German dictionary when Heinrich von Rentzdorf comes near. Austria has at last a poet, a true magister verborum, a master of words, and I am glad to be his Annunciator, if that be not too presumptuous a name."

Rentzdorf's first work, the drama *Caius Marius*, published in 1803, had been acted on nearly every stage in Germany. "It had even paid," the wits said, satirizing the remuneration which at that era even the most successful book or play brought the writer "a night of the author's losses at the gaming-table."

Caius Marius was a drama of metaphysical accusation and revolt. But Marius's dreams of world-unity and a world-wide empire, symbolized in the silver eagle that he gave to the Roman legions, had been instantly applied by

"Young Germany" to the rising spirit of nationality. In the Roman oligarchs, in Sulla above all, the same enthusiasts saw their own antagonists—the feudal princes, rapacious or cruel, and, in their narrow ambitions, the strong allies of Napoleon.

Goethe, who snubbed Kleist and disregarded Werner, had, in 1803, praised Rentzdorf. *Marius* was reviewed in the "Museenalmanach"; and the young author was invited by Karl August to Weimar.

But Rentzdorf, instead of "following up" in the same style, as Axel Petersen advised, had published, first a volume of verse in classic metres and then two volumes of prose. The former had a timid success; the latter were failures; but in the beginning of 1806 the publication of a second drama, *The Death of a Soul*, had provoked in Vienna an outburst of surprise, anger, and at last a storm of obloquy. The over-praised poet of *Caius Marius* was now pilloried as a Jacobin, an enemy of religion and of the monarchy. His private life was held up to reprobation. He was at that date not yet six and twenty, but, it was insinuated, he had accumulated within that narrow compass of years the disorders and the crimes of a Borgia or a Catiline. Abroad, his life had been as flagitious as in Vienna. He had, it was alleged, travelled in Greece only to live there in pagan freedom with a beautiful Greek whom, before the very altar, he had torn from her bridegroom. His poems, it was pointed out, exalted the marbles of the Parthenon; but the battlefields of Marathon and Leuctra had by him been left unsung. True, he had been one of the band who cut their way from Ulm, and he had fought at Austerlitz; but could the writer of *The Death of a Soul* be a patriotic Austrian?

Literary and theatrical Vienna at that epoch was governed by two old men—the poet Alzinger and the dramatist Ayrenhof, both reactionaries, both enemies of France and

of Goethe. In their attack upon Rentzdorf they were joined by a third septuagenarian, Lorenz Leopold Haschka, the author of the Austrian national hymn.

It was Haschka's incoherent tirades which first drew Amalie's attention to Rentzdorf. She bought his books. *Caius Marius* left her puzzled and unsatisfied, but the poems and prose-studies, and above all, this new drama, *The Death of a Soul*, enchained her brooding spirit. Schiller's ethical rhodomontades and Goethe's later anxious compromisings had depressed or irritated her; but here was a writer who had gazed steadily upon the abyss, here were words and cries torn from a heart that had been goaded by a suffering fierce as her own, here was a mind that in its unresting strife towards the highest and ultimate things had tolerated no compromise; here was no arid scepticism, impotent to affirm; here there was affirmation, a lofty and persisting energy, and to life's problem, an answer, terrible indeed, but fascinating and inexhaustibly profound.

The drama, *The Death of a Soul*, had, Alzinger informed her, been written for the profligate actress, Madame X; and Haschka had selected as the prototypes of its characters several well-known personages in Viennese society.

"Dug out of a woman's breast," Axel Petersen, on the other hand, had written of it the morning after the first representation, "revealing a power truly and superbly tragic—*vraiment et fièrement tragique.*"

"I delivered my soul from hell," the chief character, Teresa Malavista, declares when her lover proposes her return to the convent, "when with you I escaped those walls. And you—you would cast my soul back into hell? Ah, it is you who are possessed, Corrado; it is you into whom the tempter has entered."

Conquering her anger she pleads with him, remonstrates and he denounces God's vengeance on her sin and on his own.

"Sin?" she answers. "What is sin? Who will tell us? Oh, in each sin that with you I sinned, I was reborn in earth's first holiness. My purity till then was incest, my prayers, blasphemy. In my dead body my dead soul worshipped a dead God. Rebellion was in me a cleansing fire. I renounced my vows, but took greater vows. I fled with you. Ah, in the heaven and on the earth, what glory! What a light on the mountains; in the forest what celestial voices! You remember, Corrado, you remember? We hid in the summer woods; the summer lightnings kindled the leaves to a roof of fretted gold above us; the stars of night were our bride-candles."

Again the lover denounces God's heavy wrath on her and again she answers deliberately:

And again—"In my dead soul God's dreaming soul was reawakened; the wonder of His vision was on me and in me. To save my soul? If my body is not my soul, my soul is nothing. Last night you saw God there; you kissed me, and on my lips tasted God's wine. . . ."

Seeing in her beauty Satan only, Corrado turns from her in horror, crossing and re-crossing himself; and to all her reasoning and to all her entreaties he opposes this last word, "Repent, as I repent; pray for yourself as I will pray for you. Turn to the Crucified; cling to the Cross. The Cross, the Cross. . . ."

"Pray for me? Murderer of God, you, you will pray—and for me?"

But the strain is at the breaking point; she is a woman in a man's part. She falls, uttering wild inarticulate cries.

He leaves her, not knowing whether the sorceress, as he now imagines her, be dead or alive, and, obdurate in his resolve, enters a monastery three days later; and the woman hearing of the irreparable act, destroys herself.

In the last scene of the fourth act the hero, in the garb of a black friar, is discovered at midnight praying in his

cell, but tortured even in this sacred retreat by the singular doubt—Does he not by praying for the soul of a dead but unforgotten mistress imperil his own salvation and hers? Has not all been in vain—the murder of her love and of life?

His cry "A lost soul!" is left ringing in the spectators' ears as the curtain falls.

This book had affected Amalie with a shattering power. It put into precise, painful distinctness ideas which had long worked obscurely in herself, here in Vienna or even at Monza long ago. It seemed to her the voice of another age—but of what age? Not the era which Schiller had outlined, rising like a palm on the horizon's verge; not the era of a terrestrial paradise of comfort and well-being, such as the Girondins had visualized; nor yet the era of culture which Count Johann had accepted from Goethe's teaching and spoken of to her in words which silenced but never convinced.

In the spring of 1806 she quitted Vienna, going first to Prague, then to Karlsbad. It was a characteristic of Amalie that she never let a day pass without some hours under the open sky, walking or riding. In Vienna the ramparts and the rolling meadowland west of the city had been her recreation-ground; at Karlsbad the woods and heaths. That year in her health a sudden buoyancy, a mental and physical harmony had declared itself. In the leisured weeks at Karlsbad, she read and re-read all Rentzdorf's writings,—steeping her soul on her solitary rides or walks, in the haunting music of his verse, discovering meanwhile everything possible of his life, appearance, and character, forming her own impression, sifting the true from the false.

It was easy for her to understand the power which his personality exercised over men like Count Johann, Bolli, or Lan-Lan's brother; it was not less easy to understand the

epileptic rages or senile virulence of the septuagenarian poets, Ayrenhof and Haschka.

Reading *The Death of a Soul* in bed one morning she suddenly recollected an incident in Vienna when Haschka and Ayrenhof had come together to call on her and she had introduced the subject of Rentzdorf's drama—the impotent rage, the skinny, trembling, uplifted forefinger, and Haschka's quavering scream, "Rentzdorf? Heinrich von Rentzdorf? Countess, he is Antichrist; a blacker atheist than Bonaparte or Robespierre!"

Recalling that incident now in the glorious morning sunlight, she thrust aside the book, lay on her back and laughed like a pagan goddess to whom Hermes has been narrating a freakish story.

Meanwhile the days went past: summer's heat had become autumn's languors but still she avoided the return to the capital, as if that reading and that scenery had reared around her a palace of the soul in which she could dream of a peace mightier than the peace that seemed to have shipwrecked in her life for ever.

Amazed at the suddenness and tenacity of her own prepossession, "Can I be in error?" she asked herself. "Is this thing of God, and in this old world can a newer vision and a newer faith have indeed arisen?"

To her at least it had arisen. Earth was reinvested in meaning: its bitterness and sorrow remained, but the bitterness and sorrow were God's.

That summer, at one of the fêtes in the Hofburg devised by the Empress Ludovica, she had met Rentzdorf.

VIII

Three years had passed since that meeting.

In the surprise of the passion which had seized her it had seemed that it must burn itself out, self-destroyed by

its own excess; and in the fierceness of the love-thirst, the desert-thirst of the soul, she had let herself go, with sealed eyes, on, on, on.

Yet the days had grown to weeks, the weeks to months. Yesterday's bliss had been still the soul of to-morrow's ecstasy. The anticipation of each meeting was transport; in the realization the actual still left the imagined transport behind. Gradually the order of their days was regulated by the facilities it offered or the obstacles it opposed to their meetings. Society and the drift of everyday concerns became an increasing impatience. For their life-vision like their passion was isolating. Except in the ideal forms of music and of Greek drama they rarely found true companionship.

During a visit to Florence in the days of her revolt, her loneliness and her misery, she had stood long in front of the *Dawn* of Michael Angelo. The energy, the divine beauty and the diviner suffering in the naked figure had then daunted and appalled her, like some dream in stone of an ecstasy and an anguish that she had never known and never would know. Now she saw in it the image of her own virgin passion, her own awakening, her own rebirth in unexperienced wonder and delight. With just this might in her limbs, her clasping hands, she strove towards her lover now.

IX

The rising war feeling throughout Europe in the winter of 1808–9, the hopes rekindled by the Spanish insurrection, the wild surmises and wilder rumours, Austria's heroic rashness, Stadion's recall, the opposing policies of the court and the Archduke, and at last the certainty of war, brought on Amalie the first ordeal, compelling her to face the worn question of public and private duty.

Rentzdorf's decision was immediate.

"Here is no debate," he had said, "only an assertion. It is not for Austria, but for ourselves as Austrians that we resume this war. Germany's shame would make this a shame, this that we are, you and I."

Facing death apart or life apart, there was for these two passionate beings only silence, and in the woman's heart the conviction, heavy and chill but solemn as evening bells, that the sinking of the life-light in his eyes would leave her own eyes unseeing also.

Three days later Rentzdorf was with his regiment on the road to Ratisbon.

And the woman's part? The part of the mistress left behind?

That rôle Amalie von Esterthal conceived not less greatly than her lover conceived his rôle as a fighter.

"To see in that hour the whole; he in me and I in him, and God in both, working to His own great end across thousands of dead men as across thousands of dead worlds, dying in them to live the mightier dream that beyond Time is yet to arise—this is the command laid on me." And at another time she told herself, "Before a battle the one thing forbidden me is the prayer, 'God shield my lover!' My prayer must be, 'God for Germany!' And after a battle the one thing forbidden me is, 'Thank God my lover is safe!' My word must be, 'Is it defeat? Is it victory?'"

Thus she had lived through April and the campaign of Ratisbon; thus she had lived through May, and the horrible carnage at Eckmühl, Aspern and Essling. Then had followed the palpitating awful pause of Lobau, when, like a caged beast, Bonaparte's army was shut up in a small island girt by the Danube, whilst its enemy raged around upon the eastern shore, yet was unable to give the death-thrust to the entangled brute until at Wagram, tearing and gnawing its way through the net, out on them the monster sprang!

Worn by the anxiety and fever of the preceding weeks, it had seemed to Amalie that she could endure no further strain, that with another battle to face her brain or her life would make shipwreck; yet when on the 5th of July, the battle actually came, a kind of mad hostility to the insulter of Germany and the torturer of her lover and herself gave her the fierce strength which hate supplies.

A thunderstorm during the night had raged with so terrifying an influence that it turned her fears for her lover into a momentary vague personal fear, and a kind of gladness had filled her, till in contempt she turned on herself.

"What is this storm, which in all Austria will not destroy five lives, beside to-morrow's rage—to-morrow's?"

The day of the battle of Wagram rose sultry and oppressive even after the storm. Dazed, she had walked from one room to another, then to the garden and the streets, then back to her rooms again, dry-throated, dry-eyed, frantic at each moaning thud, thud of the cannon not ten miles away. That sound had begun at six in the morning; hour after hour it had lasted; it seemed as if it would last for ever, as if in Vienna here it were the beating seconds' accompaniment for ever.

It was now noon. In the garden was the hum of bees and the ghastly mimicry of summer peace. Her brain was parched; it felt like dust, a handful of dust shaking about in her skull.

"The symphony of battle," someone had once repeated in her presence—someone who had never been in a battle.

Most harrowing to her had always seemed that fearful pause for prayer, for officers and men to receive the sacrament.

"The symphony of battle!"

To-day she could see in it neither grandeur nor heroism. She heard, she saw only the repulsive, hideous reality—

the roaring of one kind of shell, the deadly moans of another, the terrific crash and crackle of a third; then in the sickening stench and smoke the gasps, the horrible cries, the yells, the silences, the curses, the laughter, the neighing of mangled horses, the crash and volleying of musketry like gigantic whips of steel cracking incessantly, interminably.

"The symphony of battle? What mockery!"

She watched the creeping hands of the time-piece. That frightful thunder northward still rolled on, carnage and blood. Once an awful hurly-burly followed by a dreadful silence made her spring to her feet, then throw herself on her knees, her handkerchief pressed to her mouth to stifle her own cries. The silence was the more terrific, for she knew what was happening in that silence—the terrible charge of horse or foot, the battle's essential agony.

The cannonade was resumed, fitful but persistent.

"My God, will this battle never end? How long then does it take two hundred thousand men to kill or mangle each other into powerlessness?"

Mistress of her actions no longer, she went out, past the garden, through the suburbs, into the inner city, going she knew not whither, seeking—she knew well what she was seeking.

Men and women thronged the windows, roofs, towers, balconies, watching the two "squads" of gladiators, each a hundred thousand strong, mangling and massacring each other on the Marchfeld.

Long lines of wounded began to straggle into Vienna—an unending host. The infinite sorrow of the world! Earth seemed a charnel-house; its graves stood open, and she saw corruption—nations and men and empires. In every street the wild rumour—"Defeat!"; in every street another wild rumour—"Victory!"; till rumour killed rumour and all was chaos.

She walked on; past the Prater, across the river, past

Austrian villages tranced in the afternoon quiet, still seeking—she knew well what she was seeking.

The July evening descended.

"He is dead."

Fate with inexorable accent spoke the words.

"It is now! It is now! God's dream in us is ended, God's anguish stilled. . . ."

A giant hand split the pulsating, hot, azure cope stretched like a blue black cauldron lid above her, split it and flung the halves into the abyss, and in the firmamented void the torture enginery of a universe, throbbing and panting, was stilled. The worlds fell sundering, little heaps of dust falling upon little heaps of dust.

"It is finished. Being's drama is ended. Self-destroyed, the world-soul passes to its peace."

That had been in July. Now it was October.

"And to-day—this day or to-morrow at latest I shall see him again."

She took out his letter and for the twentieth time read the open words and the cypher they concealed.

Since the surrender of Vienna in April every letter that entered or left the city was read by Bonaparte's secret police. The lovers had accordingly invented a method of communication by inserting a real letter within the words of a sham letter. The difficulty of writing such a letter was extreme; but they had leisure enough, and the difficulty was diminished by the ease with which both wrote Italian and German.

"I will be in Vienna in four days from the writing of this, or at most in six."

She studied the cypher again, testing it in every way. The meaning was unmistakable.

"To-night!" she whispered to herself with madly beating heart. "Let me not die of the joy of it! To-night!"

CHAPTER II

THE NOON PARADE

I

AT half-past eleven the old Count, wrapped in rugs and shawls, seated himself angrily in front of Toc and Amalie in the back seat of the Esterthal carriage.

The condition of the harness and of the horses was a reminder of his own and Vienna's humiliation, and at the last moment he was about to give up this drive. Yet he owed Andréossy and the French Emperor this courtesy; he was conscious too of an unadmitted curiosity—the wish to look face to face on this man whom he had not seen since 1802, when as world-dictator at Amiens and at Lunéville he gave peace to Europe.

"To Schönbrunn."

Ten minutes later, from a rise of ground they saw, less than a mile away, a low green hill crested with a white pillared temple or basilica. Nearer, the gleam of the noonday sun flashed on a triple row of windows and a long grey frontage of stone.

It was the palace of Maria Theresa. The green hill behind it was the Gloriette. There it lay like a living thing, in the wide sultry stillness of this autumn day.

"How desolate!" Toc exclaimed. How desolate! "It crouches like a beautiful slave. . . . If stones could have sense, those walls would weep."

The old Count lifted his heavy lids. He looked at the

long grey pile. Even at this distance he could, with his soldier's sight, make out the massive ornamentation, the colonnade, the outer staircases, the two huge obelisks, each surmounted by the Austrian eagle's outspread wings. To-day above that eagle floated everywhere the French tricolour, emblem, to his eyes, of all that was most unspeakable and hideous in modern times—the Paris mob's maniac cruelty, the prison massacres, the murdered queen, the humiliation year by year of Austria's war-chiefs; Coburg, Klerfayt, Beaulieu, Würmser, Cray, Alvintsky, Mack, and now, greatest of all, the Archduke Charles.

"Yes; yes," he muttered with a touch of weary fatalism. "It is so; it is so."

This Bonaparte seemed to beggar admiration. Already he had outdistanced every human competitor, past or present, in the race for glory.

He looked again at the palace. What another Austria and what another France it had been when as a boy sixty years ago, he had seen that structure rise, piece by piece, the rival of Versailles! Those broad green walks, those deep-embowered walls of yew, those cool green niches enclosing the white limbs of statues,—a royal pleasaunce indeed, fit for an empress's devotion to her gallant strong-thewed husband-lover, Francis of Lorraine!

"And now instead of Daun and Loudon, it is Bonaparte and his Septembriseurs."

He lowered his lids again and sank in somnolent sullen brooding. His face, Toc thought, the grey moustaches and closed eyes, looked like one of the old Teutonic knights carved in stone in the cathedral of Kracow.

They were now within three hundred yards of the narrow stream of the Wien which flows close past the main entrance to the palace. Around the gilt-spiked railings the crowd stood three or four deep, but as yet it was a listless, silent crowd.

A post-chaise full of women, drawn by four spirited horses, jolted past the Esterthal carriage and with laughter and greetings swept into the huge quadrangle.

"Who is she in the white hat and heron's plume?" the Count enquired.

"Madame Bellegarde," Amalie answered; "Bausset, the maître du palais, has given her a window."

"Go round by the Brühl road," he said harshly to the coachman. "We need not go in yet."

Before this spectacle of the wife of an Austrian field-marshal rushing to stare at Bonaparte, the Austrian in him was once more thoroughly awakened. He had again to choke down the command to return to Vienna.

The horses were backed, and the détour began.

This road led through the rugged and picturesque scenery south of the capital. The air was sweet; the stillness became momentarily more profound, affecting Amalie with an intensity almost morbid. It was one of those serene autumn days which appear the very emblem of all that the world-spirit strives throughout eternity to attain.

Like most cultured women of her era Amalie had been drawn into the torrent of "sentimentalism" associated with the names of Hölderlin, Volney, Ossian and Chateaubriand; but in Rentzdorf she had found a thinker and a poet who gave a deeper interpretation of nature as to art.

This emotion, this spiritual yet enervating melancholy was now upon her, evoking as its harmony the memories of days with her lover—now an assignation in old Vienna, or here amid this very scenery, or an "Ausflucht" during the first year of their intimacy, when they had spent eleven days in a solitary inn mid the Carinthian forests.

"Those autumn days!" she said under her breath. "Their tranced silence and those songless woods!"

The scent of the Carinthian pines was wafted to her down the years. The yearning which seized her was fierce as

pain. She half closed her eyes lest any outward sight or sound should mar the dream.

Until those eleven days life's actualities had ever fallen short of her ardent imagination. Therein life differed from Nature and from Music. For till then Nature's glories, a wide landscape under a setting moon, twilight by a lake, the midday stillness falling between a mountain gorge had, like Music, exceeded the heart's imaginings and held it in a rapture of adoration. But those days in the Carinthian inn had ushered in a mystic golden chain of linked hours in which life's actualities left behind even Music's and Nature's transcendencies.

"You are mad, and you infect me with your madness," Toc had once said to her in one of her flashes of Slav intuition, "but I would rather know this madness of yours than all the world's wisdom. Maria Magdalene—what she might have been to Christ, that you are to Rentzdorf."

"Thanks, I prefer Amalie von Esterthal," she had answered.

The recollection roused her, and, smiling, she looked at Toc's pensive face.

The old Count, his thin shoulders and figure emerging from the rugs like the head and neck of a tortoise from its shell, was teasing her about Poland.

"Who is the greatest fool amongst your kings, Princess?"

"Sobieski," Toc retorted, guessing his intention. "And why? Because he aided Austria and delivered Vienna for you when he might have let the Turks sack it."

"Right," he answered. "And I, an Austrian, praise your wit. And now I put to you, a Pole of the Poles, a second conundrum—who is the next greatest fool after John Sobieski?"

Toc blinked her eyes as though the sun were in them; but the device did not give her inspiration.

"I will tell you, Princess. It is Poniatowski; it is your

precious prince Poniatowski, the betrayer of Germany, the abettor of Bonaparte."

"Poniatowski is a hero, not a traitor," Toc flamed out indignantly. "He may be false to Germany, but he is true to Poland; none truer, none."

"Well, we shall see," the old Count said sententiously, touching the tip of one of Toc's delicate ears. "A knavish speech remains steadfast in a knavish ear. Time will bring my words to light."

And satisfied with the vaticination, he pointed to a dell thick with gorse and brambles and remarked that, like the ground on which Schönbrunn stood, it had once belonged to the Knights Templars.

A bugle call rang out clear and sweet in the stillness. It came, not from Schönbrunn, but from their right—from the south-west from some cantonment.

"You have Prince Berthier's passes?" he said suspiciously to Amalie. "It is certain that he will be present at this parade?"

"Quite certain, padrino. He told me so in the Graben yesterday."

II

The two fountains in front of Schönbrunn, the one representing the Danube and its tributaries, the other the recently annexed Polish provinces, were being stared at contemptuously or negligently by the French troops now filling the spacious quadrangle. A group of carriages, occupied almost exclusively by Viennese nobility, was stationed close to the eastern wing of the palace.

"Well, monsieur le baron, what are the ladies of Vienna saying of us now?" asked a French aide-de-camp, stopping his fine black horse close to the carriage in which Freihoff, the official, sat with the twins.

Disconcerted by the apostrophe, which seemed to demand a witty reply, Freihoff put on a look of sulky dignity and said nothing.

"Why, what the devil should they say of you?" a Jäger answered. "The women of Vienna have memories. Have you not robbed them of sixty thousand men, their cousins, brothers, lovers, husbands of friends?"

Montesquiou, the aide-de-camp, a stranger to the speaker, affected not to hear. Though he had a tinge of the brutish manners of the Napoleonic staff, he was a gentleman and felt that he had brought the retort upon himself.

Two other French officers sitting their horses a few yards away, overheard Montesquiou's question and the Jäger's answer.

"What is that the Austrian says?" one of them muttered to his companion. "Bigre, have we not given Vienna thirty thousand French stallions that neigh as joyously to those Austrian jennets as any Pandour or Croat of them all? Hein?"

"Taisez-vous, Legros! Are you drunk by twelve o'clock? Have you no eyes?"

The officer who spoke thus angrily was Colonel Favrol, a man of good family like Montesquiou, and though an enthusiast for Bonaparte, yet possessing the mind of an artist and a dreamer. Count Esterthal's carriage had at that moment drawn up immediately beside that of Bolli and Freihoff, and he himself and Legros were the two officers quartered, not indeed upon the Palazzo Esterthal, but upon the old Count's Opera box.

"Ah, your Viennese flame! She too is here, is she?" Legros answered, thrusting out his thick red underlip.

Amalie, after a friendly answer to Favrol's salute, glanced quickly at the terrace and double flight of stairs above the colonnade on her left, and then at the waiting crowd outside the railings—shop-keepers, artisans, loafers, beggars, thou-

sands of German or Czech faces, round, honest, frank, sarcastic or supercilious.

A quick roll of drums announced the arrival of a division of the Guard. The regiments of foot began to move to their places. The huge oblong was now packed with troops, horse and foot—cuirassiers and Polish lancers, hussars, chasseurs and grenadiers. Aides were riding about in all directions. The commands of superior officers were repeated by their subordinates and passed from rank to rank. The joyous peal of a bugle was followed by the swift, incredibly graceful evolution of some squadrons of cavalry.

"Those hats must be very uncomfortable on a hot day," naïvely observed the younger twin, gazing at the shakos of the grenadiers.

No one answered the remark. All eyes were on the evolution of the horsemen or on the sombre lines of the infantry, those world-conquering legions, enhaloed as by an aureole with the light of victory which, kindled at Valmy, had burned with a brighter and ever brighter lustre through years of war, from Arcola and Marengo to Austerlitz, Jena and Wagram—seventeen years of war, battles of the republic, battles of the directory, battles of the consulate, battles of the empire.

An adjutant with a pale and angry face galloped up to Favrol, who, stopping by Amalie's carriage, had begun to name the regiments to her.

"What is the matter?" Favrol asked, impatient at the interruption.

"The 31st again, mon colonel! They will be late at God's judgment day if they can—these dogs!"

Favrol by a word accorded him the permission to leave his post, and he dashed through the main gates between the two great obelisks and the gilt eagles glittering in the autumn noon.

Toc's eyes followed the hussar.

"He is going to Nussdorf," she thought, trying to recollect the name of the division quartered in that suburb.

"Who is in command of Nussdorf?"

"General Vandamme, madame la princesse," Favrol answered.

Toc averted her head. Vandamme's savagery seemed to taint the air.

Turning once more to Amalie, Favrol resumed his talk. Would she be at the opera to-night? It was to be Mozart's *Cosi fan tutti;* the Emperor had given the order.

But a murmur and a stir ran right round the crowd stationed outside the iron railings tipped with gilt spear-points. A deep and presaging silence followed, a silence like that in a cathedral when the bell announces the uncovering of the Host.

Napoleon was about to appear.

A riderless white horse had been led forward and stood surrounded by equerries at the foot of the stair in front of the palace door.

Seconds ticked past; a minute; two minutes; four; still he did not come.

The murmurs rose again. What had happened?

Innumerable eyes were fastened on the white horse, studying each detail of its green and gold trappings. Was this the famous charger Solyman, one citizen immediately behind the group of carriages asked, or was it Æsop? It was the Arab, another asserted, which Maximilian I. of Bavaria had presented to the French Emperor. The frontlet and jewelled bit made that indisputable. And in complacent slow South German he narrated an anecdote to his neighbour, who had that morning arrived from Prague. Napoleon, returning one summer evening from Vienna to Schönbrunn and putting his horse to the gallop, had been thrown violently just outside the suburbs. It was the first time he had ridden the Bavarian's gift.

"Is that true?" one of the twins asked in a low voice speaking in French.

"Most certainly," Kessling answered dictatorially. "It was a Thursday, the 18th May, three days before Aspern, a moonlight night. The French Emperor was returning from a visit to the Alleegasse, Prince Berthier's lodging."

Outside the railings the conversation continued.

"Why is the horse named Solyman?" the Prague citizen asked.

"To affront the Viennese," came the answer. "Thus Napoleon is as much greater than Solyman II. as the rider is greater than the horse. D'ye see? As how? We Viennese brag of our victory over Solyman; Napoleon sends him out to grass or rides him into battle."

There was a laugh. Toc's eyes were dancing. She always had a pleasure in the wit of the streets.

"Ah, what is that?"

A figure in a blazing uniform all gold and scarlet had appeared on the balcony. An order was shouted at the same instant. Two adjutants galloped across the courtyard in the direction of the western gate.

But the troops still stood grim and silent as bastions gleaming with brass, iron and steel.

Once more there was the hush of awed expectancy. Still Napoleon did not come.

Meanwhile the white horse made himself comfortable and, pawing the ground, swished the flies from his quarters with his short-cut tail, tranquil as though he were waiting for a Viennese mercer returning to his shop in the Graben, instead of for an Emperor about to review the most famous legions in the annals of war.

To Amalie the air seemed suddenly to have grown sultry and oppressive. Her heart was beating unsteadily. The sensation which she experienced was exactly like that which in a theatre she experienced when the curtain was about to

rise on a scene too harrowing. It was against these men and above all against the man who was about to appear that her lover had fought; it was to these men that she owed the sick horror of the days before Wagram.

Involuntarily she glanced around. Over the old Count's features was passing a mask of grey and rigid stone. Bolli's look retained its habitual light cynicism, but there was a tightness about the mouth. Kessling was trying to imitate Bolli's indifference, but his mouth hung slightly open; his eyes stared. The elder twin sat demure and stiff. The younger had ceased to gaze at her own red-heeled shoes and embroidered stockings, and lolled with her slim legs crossed.

The crowd began to fret and curse. Why did he not come? Being German, it was now too excited to gossip. It could only wait stupidly sullen or stolidly good-natured.

And here within this quadrangle and yonder outside the railings, in the brains that ticked behind those thousands of eyes, something of the opinions expressed in the Palazzo Esterthal, something also of the opinions of later generations, were passing and re-passing in a more or less syncopated form. To some Napoleon was a mere criminal, harsh, egoistic, brutal, the assassin of d'Enghien, the assassin of Palm; to others, he was already the hero of romance, simply "the greatest man" depicted forty years later in Thiers' fatuous and famous volumes; to others, a giant mediocrity, destitute of supreme genius even in war, yet coveting and obtaining all that the ordinary man covets and seeks to obtain; to a few, something supernatural, portentous and evil.

Toc became restless, and repeatedly turned to look at Amalie. The latter sat silent, feeling rather than seeing the quick, nervous motion of Toc's long lashes. She felt the heat of the sun, now right overhead, but she did not raise her sunshade.

Infected by the emotion pulsating on every side, her imagination reverted to Napoleon, less as a man than as some prodigious event daily affecting or appearing to affect tens of thousands of lives in every nation of Europe and, so to speak, throughout the world; never alone; always moving amid armies, thronged theatres, political revolutions. But effacing this impression of vague masses of force she saw him as in the enthusiasm of her girlhood she had seen him enter Milan, his Hamlet-like countenance very pale, mounted on a black charger. She contrasted him with Austrian generals or with Austrian statesmen, whose character and private idiosyncracies were known to her from gossip or observation—Cobenzl, Kaunitz, Stadion, Metternich, Wittgenstein, Ziethen, Hiller, Bellegarde, even Liechtenstein and the Archduke.

"No, he is of another clay. He is not like other men at all. Or is it my stupidity?"

Fragments of Rentzdorf's talk recurred to her. Like Beethoven, Schiller, Goethe and other German artists or men of letters, Rentzdorf had been profoundly troubled by Napoleon's personality. Unlike Wordsworth in England and Beethoven in Germany he had not burst into denunciation when the consul became emperor.

"Bonaparte has brought back to the world the secret of heroism that was lost to the world," he had written to her from Ratisbon, and he had quoted Sarpedon's reply to Glaucus as at once the most heroic verse in all poetry, and the fittest to express his own conception of Napoleon's career. Right or wrong, it is not in modern times, but with the heroes of the *Iliad* that we must set this man; the essential, imperishable part of him."

A deep breath, almost like a sob, startled her. Then a single voice, a woman's in the crowd, rang out.

"Yonder! Yonder he is! Mother of God, how beautiful!"

It was Napoleon.

Toc, with a convulsive gesture, grasped Amalie's hand.

An immense shout at the same moment rent the air sweeping into its contagious enthusiasm even the Austrians —"Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur."

Neither Toc nor Amalie heard it. Both sat as though walled in by silence, their eyes fixed on the stairs.

A short man in a cocked hat, a white vest, a dark green coat on which a solitary star glittered, had suddenly appeared on the terrace. He did not pause more than ten seconds, then began hastily to descend the flight of eighteen steps on his right, the flight nearest to the eastern wing of the palace.

Toc turned her shining eyes first on Amalie then on the old Count.

Napoleon? That man who was like an earthquake, could he actually be, there in the broad sunlight, not more than fifty yards from where she sat?

"He should have his head bare always, like the busts of the Cæsars," she heard Bolli say in a voice that, though scarcely above a whisper, sounded distinct as a bell. "Neither hat nor helmet will ever become that brow."

Toc studied avidly the figure at the foot of the stairs, the ungainly hat, the creases on his waistcoat, the spurs which seemed too large for his height; rivetted her glance on the greyish pallor of the countenance, the wide, preoccupied forehead, the vitreous brooding gaze that appeared to take in everything yet rested nowhere.

But his foot was now in the stirrup, and awkwardly, though rapidly, he shuffled into the saddle.

The transformation was instantaneous.

He sat motionless for several seconds, ten, twenty, or thirty, as though he waited for someone who did not come. An expression of singular melancholy filled the eyes, which now appeared blue—a pale but definite blue.

"He is thinking of Lannes."

The words seemed to have been spoken in Bolli's neighbourhood rather than by Bolli himself—so fast shut were his lips, so intent, so unmoving, so inexpressive his features when Toc flashed round on him.

"Ah," she thought to herself in Polish, "what phantoms must everywhere attend him! Everywhere! Everywhere! Phantoms of vanished armies, dead friends, dead companions-in-arms, marshals, generals, captains, colonels, the rank and file! The Man of Destiny? It is Destiny itself on horseback over there."

Napoleon's brow in 1809 had still its impressive quiet, his glance had lost none of its authoritativeness; but to an impartial scrutiny he carried his forty-one years badly; his cheeks were puffy and dirty-grey in hue; there were folds of loose flesh in his neck above the collar of his coat; the thickening of the back of the leg against the saddle was evident.

Amalie felt Toc's hand jerk her own. She turned to meet a curious look in the eyes of the volatile Slav.

"C'est bête, tout cela, n'est-ce pas? I can understand why Madame Walewska wept so much when she gave herself to him. With that face and figure, he is not the lover to make a woman forget her sins! Certainly he is not like the man you spoke to me of in your room—hein?"

With a joyous, airy laugh she leaned her elbow on the side of the carriage, and lifting her head high sat half angrily, half contemptuously surveying the conqueror and his suite, every man of whom to her eyes looked a "*roturier*," a "ranker."

Was it to see this that she had that morning annoyed and perhaps estranged Count Johann forever?

Napoleon, surrounded by his glittering suite, had advanced to the first line of troops.

His head, Toc said critically, was too large for so diminu-

tive a body, and that broad, powerful chest suggested a dwarf's malignant strength. He had long arms; and he sat his horse as though with those long arms he had seized it from an ambush and, springing on its back, now crushed the superb brute to the earth by his super-human weight or cunning.

"Comme c'est vilain!"

On Amalie, meanwhile, Napoleon made an impression of a different sort. The tragic, mysterious forces behind this man affected her.

"Yes even in the saddle he looks no hero," she admitted, her gaze following the white horse and his rider. "He looks even vulgarly aggressive; and when he walks he digs his heels into the ground to give himself height or assertiveness. He does not walk; he struts."

Yet was not Hildebrand, she asked in a flash of recollection,—in the single authentic description which has come down to us—just such an insignificant, short, thick-set fellow, with nothing notable except the blue, piercing eyes?

"Yet at Canossa. . . ."

At Monza she had breathed in, as her natural air, the history of the Middle Age. She knew the great pontiffs Hildebrand, Innocent, Boniface, Sixtus, almost as friends; the not less titanic Ghibellines their antagonists; the saints and the poets, the artists and the scholars; beside Napoleon they all seemed lesser men, less mysterious, less intricately and variously distinguished and set apart.

And a new train of ideas arose to confirm this impression. As her glance passed from figure to figure of the suite, she had seen them at first only in the mass—the sinewy grace of the horses, the brilliant uniforms, the plumes, the helmets, the gilt spurs, the white and scarlet, the orange, blue and gold of the embroideries. Now she took in personal details. These were the faces, these were the figures of remarkable men, men whose names were spoken with admiration in

every capital of Europe. Yet merely in feature, how commonplace they one and all appeared beside Napoleon! And she summoned up the faces of the absent marshals—Masséna, Soult, Ney, Augereau, Davout, Murat. Yes, remarkable they were; great they might be, those marshals and generals, absent or present; but again, Bonaparte's greatness was of another order than theirs. It baffled her; but it was undeniable.

"Ugh! How he smells of eau de Cologne!" Albertina said in her clear-cut but affected tones, pressing her lace handkerchief to her nostrils. "Did you notice it as he rode past?"

"Yet he is said to hate violent perfumes," Bolli said reflectively.

"He does," Kessling interposed in his heavy emphatic way. And to the delight of the twins, who had been strictly brought up in the Maria Theresa tradition, he narrated one of the riskiest and most recent of anecdotes, yet very much to the present point—how Bonaparte last November had turned a Spanish dancer out of the Escurial at midnight, because, having given her an assignation, she had, the better to captivate her imperial admirer, saturated not only her wearing apparel but her skin with the heady perfumes whose secret the Spanish women had acquired from the Saracens.

III

Bolli, with lowered eyelids, sat examining intently a small group of Viennese citizens who on foot were pressing close about the Emperor. These men and women were, he saw at once, citizens of the middle or lower class, the bearers of petitions. One of Napoleon's staff was receiving the petitions, handing some to the Emperor, others to an official of the household. Amongst the petitioners Bolli noticed a young man, apparently a student, who, when Napoleon appeared,

had been waiting at the western of the two flights of outer stairs, and, on Napoleon descending the eastern flight, had run round rapidly as though to meet him; but before he could reach the Emperor, Napoleon had mounted, and sat on horseback surrounded by his staff.

Bolli was interested by the boy's appearance, by his youth and fine features, and by the suppressed ardour or excitement in his bearing. His gestures seemed to indicate that he was expostulating with the guards and that he was refusing to present his petition in the usual manner, but was insisting upon handing it to the Emperor himself.

At that moment Napoleon and his entire suite, amongst whom Bolli recognized Prince Berthier, the duc de Rovigo, General Rapp, Mouton, and the fearless but effeminate grace of Saint-Croix, moved towards the troops stationed in the remotest part of the quadrangle. A detachment of cavalry swinging forward at the same time made a screen which momentarily hid from sight the Emperor and those about him.

Bolli saw the youthful petitioner no longer, for his attention was engrossed by the dispute which had arisen amongst his Viennese friends whether they should get out of their carriages and follow Napoleon on foot, or go forward in their carriages as far as the guards would permit them, or simply remain where they were.

"How Austrian!" Bolli reflected. "My God, how Austrian! O my country!"

A trivial incident determined the action of all. Madame de Bellegarde and her party, who had been the guests of de Bausset, the Emperor's prefect of the palace, and had been standing at one of the windows of Schönbrunn, now came forward in their bright-coloured costumes, turned up feathered hats and floating veils. A cloud of perfume came with them.

"Ah, Princess, ah, Countess!" cried one of them, stop-

ping beside the carriage in which Toc and Amalie were seated. "Did you have a good view? He looks in a vile temper, does he not?"

"Varinsky declares that he has been abominably rude to Prince John of Liechtenstein and has sent a most insulting note to our dear Emperor's peace proposals. We shall have war."

Amalie knew this woman's character, but sne heard the last words with a sudden sickening terror, and as through a thick mist she heard voices and fragments of the ensuing dialogue.

"Ugh! the Corsican peasant!"

"The noble Archduke and our dear Emperor. . . ."

"If the fool English had not sat down to rot in Walcheren. . . ."

"Have you heard M. de Metternich's latest *mot?*" said another voice: "'I was born to be the enemy of the French Revolution. And Napoleon is the Revolution *botté.*'"

They were the clear ringing tones of Madame de Bellegarde. She was very much the Field Marshal's wife, domineering and condescendingly affable by turns, and to Freihoff's irritated confusion she now addressed to him a voluble harangue on the triumphs of Metternich, the miraculous young diplomat at Stockholm, and above all at Paris; his dignified retort to the Corsican when, a few months ago, the latter, seizing him by the collar of his coat, had demanded, "What then does your master, Francis II., wish?" "My master wishes that his ambassador should be respected,"—the brilliant plans he had formed by which Austria should become the temporary ally of France; long enough, that is to say, for this atheistical, gimcrack parody of an empire to die of spontaneous combustion,—when, Austria, by the mere pressure of events, would be the solitary first power left standing, and, dominating

Europe, for Europe's benefit, would bring back again the great days of Charles V. and Maximilian.

"Austria? The future of Austria?"

It was an inexhaustible theme, absorbing enough to make these men and women forget Napoleon himself and discuss the flimsiest or most serious theories. Instantly the buzz of conversation became louder. Many in their excitement came down from their carriages. The Viennese power of confusing what is with what is desired, the Slav power of mistaking memories for hopes, gave ardour to their words and gestures.

If the eye of an observer could have excluded the serried ranks of Napoleon's legions, and taken in only the outline of the sombre distant woods, and felt only the stillness of the autumn day, he might have imagined that this brilliantly attired throng were no more the natives of a captive city crowding to do homage to a victor's greatness or a victor's pride, but members of a free society, a hunting party, say, such as one sees in Watteau's paintings, halting for the noon-day heat to pass.

But an immense shout rent the air, making even these dust-clogged hearts to tremble by its violence.

"Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!"

"What is the matter now?"

They looked into each other's faces. Was Napoleon haranguing the troops? Was he making some proclamation?

Again the shout was repeated, more prolonged, zigzagging along the lines.

In those voices Bolli, at least, and the old Count, read a heroism or a fanaticism against which Germany was still powerless.

Then, at a considerable distance, a trumpet rang out, a sound that seemed the very spirit of war.

"It is the chasseurs of the Guard," Bolli said to the old Count. "Yonder they come! How they ride, these fellows!"

Bolli, tormented by his own thoughts, had not looked at the riders attentively; but, anticipating the question, had answered, as he imagined, accurately enough to satisfy an old man's curiosity.

The Count watched the horsemen. A light rose in his dim eyes. War was once more the only game fit for a man, the only art worthy the consecration of a life-time, and for him that game was over, and the season of that consecration gone.

"They are not the chasseurs," he said harshly, scanning the squadron nearest to him. "Who are they? Ask him, I beg of you, ask him," he said, turning to Amalie, and pointing his trembling arm in the direction of an orderly who was riding leisurely past with an off-duty air. Favrol and Montesquiou and the other French officers had followed the Emperor some minutes before.

"Nansouty's cuirassiers, madame," the orderly answered.

"And those others?"

"Durosnel and the 9th Hussars, escort of the wounded returning to Znaim and Mölk."

The officer, who was very young, spoke with emphasis and naïve surprise, unable to comprehend that any man or woman of any nation could be ignorant of such names as Nansouty and Durosnel.

"Who the devil cares about Nansouty's cuirassiers or Durosnel's hussars?" an Austrian muttered. "Meerveldt's Uhlans or Siegenthal's Light Horse are worth a dozen of them."

"Ah, tiens! See yonder," Madame de Bellegarde exclaimed, not liking the reference to Siegenthal, her husband's rival—"the dog! What an ugly mongrel!"

A mangy cur, with his ears down, was trotting stealthily along the front of the palace; but once under the colonnade he stopped, as if considering, and then bolted at right angles

straight towards the entrance. The guards stationed by the obelisks opened the gilt-spiked iron gates at once.

Albertina clapped her hands and laughed joyously at their deference to the unhappy-looking cur.

"What does it mean?" she asked eagerly. "Whose is the dog?"

"Bonaparte's familiar," Kessling answered with his boisterous laugh, "the black fiend to whom he has sold his soul."

"It is Malbrouck, madame," the orderly explained to Toc's silent question. Attracted at once by Toc's vivacity and the sunlight on Amalie's hair, he had loitered by the carriage and with a half-boyish awkwardness, for under the fierce-looking shako it was a boy's face that smiled out on the two charming women, he began to sketch the history of the most famous of all regimental dogs.

At the battle of Marengo, nine years ago, Malbrouck had been a pup; but he had seen every later campaign except that of Jena. He had had his first bayonet thrust at Marengo itself. The paw of his right foreleg had been smashed by a bullet at Austerlitz, and this, for a time, had sickened him of war. At Eylau, however, he had reappeared, and throughout that dreary campaign he had passed from regiment to regiment, accepting a kick or a blow from the flat of a sabre as a hint that his time of service with the cuirassiers or the hussars had expired. His lowered ears merely proved that he had recognised in the orderly an officer of a regiment which he had quitted; for during the past ten days he did not belong to the cuirassiers but to the dragoons stationed in the city. Malbrouck had, therefore, no right to be at Schönbrunn that morning, and knew it.

Bolli sat listening to the narrative. A crowd of ideas and emotions was struggling in him—anger, defeated ambition, this morbid, ill-starred passion for Lan-Lan, a vague hope for

the future of Germany and contempt for that hope and for all hope, the German's resentment against the greatness of France, the individual's resentment against the greatness of Bonaparte. Yet where in Austria could he ever have found the road to that dazzling summit? Luck—it was Bonaparte's luck!

Bolli had talent enough and brain enough to make his envy of Bonaparte not ridiculous.

"But Austria is rotten, rotten through and through. Chemnitz is right. She must sink as Venice has sunk if Germany is ever to arise. Yes, by God, we are degenerates; to us there is no meaning anywhere; but at least we are nearer the height of things than these demi-devil barrack-room swaggerers of Bonaparte!"

IV

Napoleon, meanwhile, had reviewed his grenadiers and addressed a brief congratulation to a detachment of sappers for their completion of the *tête du pont* at Krems. His anger, which ought to have been terrible, had, to the surprise of his staff, not fallen on the laggard 31st.

As he now rode slowly towards the western gate his cloudy mien was very noticeable.

A detachment of the wounded, all belonging to the old guard and still fit for service, had been drawn up four deep in the shadow of the houses and some fine trees. They stood, this mournful band, silent, resigned or morose. The faces of many of them had been tanned by the suns of many climes, Italy, Egypt, Germany, Spain, Poland, Austria; the faces of others were fresh and still youthful, grave or lighted up by a reckless and ruthless gaiety, exempt from joy. No calumny, scarcely disaster itself, had power to darken the exultancy, the plenitude of life, which possessed them looking once more on *him*.

These were Bonaparte's "wolves" — attached to him by

one of the most complex and singular sympathies known in the annals of war.

Historians of Napoleon drag in Attila or compare the allegiance of these desperate yet disciplined bands to the attachment which bound his veterans to Hannibal, or his mercenaries to Wallenstein. M. Taine has even caricatured the real character of the French armies by comparing them with the "Free Companies" of the Middle Age, and by comparing Bonaparte himself with a Francesco Sforza or a Castruccio Castracani. There was, indeed, a touch of the Hun in the armies of the Empire; and in Bonaparte himself there was a touch of Attila. But like the ruins of a sunset the ruins of a great ideal coloured all the actions of those armies. Even their violence and their lawlessness were a challenge to the inert nations — "Endure our arrogance or find within yourselves the motives to a higher arrogance or a greater heroism. Liberty? Yes, we idolized it once. But whilst we fought for your liberty, *our* harvests rotted in the fields. Our enemies reaped their harvests and ours, and you did nothing. Liberty, we know now, is an empty name; but the greatness of man—that is not yet a dream? Glory and plunder, a forced kiss or a forced till, then a soul panted out on the sod—these are life's ultimate essence?"

These were the questions that the "wolves" glared at their Emperor, once in heroic confidence, to-day in Vienna searchingly, doubtingly.

And in silence also Bonaparte answered—"There is in life no other greatness! The path to glory to him who can tread it! That is my word to you."

"Vive l'Empereur !"

It was to the new Mohammed the response of his faithful; not with the droning accent of congregations in mosque or cathedral, but shouted out clear in laughter and joy like the ringing of swords.

Greatened by his purpose and his presence they mut-

tered the creed to themselves and to each other—march ing, marching; knowing in life four things only, the march the bloody hailstorm of bullets, the bivouac, the red dawn the day after.

Bonaparte's own contempt for "ideologues" was in harmony with the sentiment of his armies. He was a sensualist and a materialist; so were his officers; so were the men. He was in his heart of hearts an "atheist"; but it was challengingly. He refused his reverence to the stupid gods created by stupid men. And who shall condemn him? He denied Jesus and the Jahve of Isaiah. Was he to kneel before the demi-deity of Hegel or La Révellière-Lépeaux? What vapid futilities, what verbal juggleries in those men whom he despised! Hegel, Kant, Schleiermacher, Schelling—did not such names justify his contempt for ideologues and professors?

To the eyes of an English observer in this very year, 1809, Bonaparte's Guard looked, he tells us, as though every man of it either had been or ought to be at the galleys. "An army of convicts!" Yet, when in 1816 this same observer attempted to throw upon a huge canvas the last charge of that Guard at Waterloo, he could find no better inspiration to aid him in conjuring up those war-worn countenances than just to stand for several minutes or for several hours in front of the portraits of—Horatio, Lord Nelson! Sentimentality; naïveté; intrepidity; exhaustless *bravoure!*

V

"You have seventeen wounds and have not got the cross?" Napoleon said in an indefinable accent to one of these "braves."

"Yes, sire, I have the cross."

"Comment? Where is it?"

The grenadier, puzzled, looked at his breast.

The cross was hidden by the lapel of his coat.

Napoleon passed on, addressing here a question, there a jest, till he reached the last man on the left. Then he cast his eyes back over the ranks, oddly reluctant that morning to leave his "faithful."

Other things were shams; here at least amongst his grenadiers was reality.

"We shall meet again, mes enfants."

"Vive l'Empereur!"

It was the assignation for a battlefield bloodier than Aspern-Essling or Wagram.

He was about to remount his horse. He had even given a command to the colonel on duty to change the direction of the line so that the grenadiers might once more defile before him, when a stir, an altercation and a rapid interchange of question and answer on his right made him check his impatient horse in order to discover the cause of the bustle. He saw, not fifteen feet away, Berthier dashing up to a knot of officers composed of Rapp, Savary, and three or four of his own or Berthier's suite. He noticed at the same moment, in the midst of this group, a slim figure which, though dressed in the ordinary blue coat and high white neck-band of the period, seemed that of a boy of sixteen or seventeen. He had a rapt, uplifted look, and held in his hand stretched high above his head a sheet of paper. He was gesticulating violently, and crying out in a language which Bonaparte took to be German.

The student—if he were a student—had evidently, Napoleon thought, wished to present his petition whilst he was on foot. But why?

"One more importunate petitioner," he reflected with a shrug. "Oh these Germans!" And he turned aside indifferently.

But there was a sudden gleam of steel. He had not the

opportunity to distinguish whether the gleam came from Rapp's sword or from some other cause; for at that moment, an abrupt and mournful roll of the drum announced a harrowing and piteous spectacle on his left.

It was a strange band that, slowly debouching from behind Schönbrunn, entered by the western gate and drew up before their Cæsar. It was the wounded of the Young and of the Old Guard, incurably wounded or unfit any longer for war. Three days ago they had been released from hospital or from prison. There they now stood, riveting his sight, a melancholy apparition. They were of all arms; some fearfully maimed, yet erect and resolute-looking; some dejected; some sullen and defiant; some reckless or laughing. Some shouted "Vive l'Empereur"; others in silence looked their rage on the man who had brought them to this. There were faces still bandaged; faces which showed sabre-slashes or bayonet-thrusts that had partially gangrened; bodies amputated hideously. Some came from the great abbey at Mölk; some had marched from Znaim or from Krems to be present at this day's parade.

There they now stood, waiting, prepared for their farewell to war and to him.

"Mes enfants . . ." he answered to another feeble shout "Vive l'Empereur!" "Mes enfants. . . ."

Dismounting, he went up to the men thus maimed or afflicted for him or for the idea which he incarnated. He did not now content himself with a survey; he was seeing them for the last time on earth; he was the brother or the father taking an eternal farewell of his children.

"Mes enfants. . . ."

His glittering spangled escort stood and watched.

This was a moment in which Bonaparte was supreme. To see him thus was to see the living refutation of the calumnies of Jaffa.

He went in and out amongst the ranks. He spoke to this

man; spoke to that. His eyes now darkened with pain, now kindled with approval or encouragement; and his strident voice, with its Corsican accent, softening strangely, he looked at their scars, touched the amputated stump of an arm or of a hand; he permitted a carabineer, three of whose fingers had been blown off as he wrenched aside the muzzle of a rifle, to place his own fingers in his mouth where the underjaw had been removed; and long he stood silent beside a chasseur, nothing of whose blackened face seemed living except the fierce sadness in the eyes. He had been one of the most powerful men in Marmont's corps, over six feet in height, full of the joy of life and vigorous youth. From others Napoleon seemed to give and to receive the most intimate or tender confidences, long confidences though they lasted but a second, words and looks that made it a light thing for these men to march to the ends of Europe, and, under his eye or far from it, fight for him, suffer for him, hunger, thirst, fatigue, heat, snow, and die for him.

CHAPTER III

NAPOLEON'S RIDE

I

NAPOLEON heard the last "Vive l'Empereur," the last bugles and buoyant rat-a-tat-tat of the drums as the troops marched back to their cantonments in the city itself or on the slopes above Nussdorf, or to the gardens, or at Hetzing and Ebersdorf.

The angry anxiety and disquieting premonitions of the morning, banished by the sight of his grenadiers, had returned. But Corsican and superstitious as he was, he could find no cause for these presentiments.

"Bah, I shall go for a ride. The open sky will clear my brain. That stuffy palace is full of stoves, haunted by bats and foul deeds."

He wheeled his horse, which curveted with expectancy.

At that moment Berthier approached as though to communicate to the Emperor a matter of importance. Napoleon looked at him dubiously. Never had Berthier's face—the gosling whom he had made an eagle—seemed more vapid, his short thick-set figure more wooden. His cheeks were powdered, but that did not disguise his age. His eyes had the vitreous unpleasant lustre which eyes that move in a powdered face always have.

"Not now!"

Napoleon spoke curtly, and gave way to the strain of the Arab towards the obelisks and the huge bronze gates.

What could Berthier have to say? His couriers had not arrived from Spain. No message from Altenburg or Totis, where the Emperor Francis now resided, was possible. All else could wait.

Signing to his escort, Napoleon, crossing the dirty stream that gives Vienna its name, took the northerly road. Once in the open country he struck a little to the left towards the heights of the Wiener Wald.

Above him and around him was the autumn stillness. Nature in the woods and on the hills and the far outstretched plains was accomplishing the vast processional changes of her year, and beside that process even the history of this region, receding beyond the Middle Age and the Roman times into a dim and half-fabulous past, appeared to his brooding eye brief as the glory of the leaves.

"Un songe léger qui se dissipe," he said, repeating one of his commonplaces. A dream that passes life and man's annals.

His thoughts turned to that morning's work. He contemplated it now with satisfaction, now with anxiety and discontent. He had made a concession to Austria. He had reduced her indemnity from a hundred millions to eighty millions; but except in this point he had not abated by a jot his original demands. Bavaria, his ally, would henceforth dominate the eastern slopes of the Hansruck. The left bank of the Traun was compromised. The ulcer in the Tyrol would at length be scarified. Every acre he demanded in Carinthia, Carniola, Fiume, and Trieste was to be surrendered. Illyria would start from the tomb in which she had lain for centuries. What might not that new nation effect? The pennons of six thousand ships already floated in the harbours of Trieste. Trieste was the predestined rival of Venice. Across Illyria he would drive a high-road to the very heart of the Ottoman empire. It was the subjugation of Europe.

"And it is time."

Every additional day at Schönbrunn lowered his prestige, and gave colour to the damning rumours circulated by the English press.

He felt the edge of his hat tight on his forehead. He shifted it a little, and rode on.

Well, if it did mean war, he resumed, it would be a zest to inflict upon Austria a more crushing defeat than Wagram.

"And afterwards?"

He would certainly dethrone Francis II. That perjured despot was no longer fit to reign. Indemnifying the Czar in Poland or in the Danubian principalities, he would place on the throne of the Habsburgs a subject-king, Davout perhaps, or the Archduke Charles, or . . .

"But they will accept this morning's offer. I read it on Liechtenstein's face."

"Your Emperor must accept this or sacrifice the lives of a hundred thousand men," he had said to the plenipotentiaries as the clock struck eleven, and getting up he had stood with folded arms under the portrait of Charles V. "You are soldiers, not diplomats, both of you. I too am a soldier. We understand each other. We know what war means, you and I. It is the scourge of the human race."

He had not uttered the words in a voice of menace, but in a voice of camaraderie, dejected a little yet perfectly quiet and resolute. He had conducted each interview in that manner, as a soldier conferring with soldiers, men who act, disdaining the fatuities of men who talk, diplomatists and "avocats." Earlier in the morning, taking Count Bubna aside, he had expostulated with him on his fidelity to Austria. He had enlarged upon the history of Bohemia, the Count's native country. He had compassionated her wrongs from Ottocar to Podiebrad, and from Podiebrad to the Winter King. And who had inflicted those wrongs? Who, after the White Mountain, had stabbed

Bohemia in the back, leaving her a corpse among the nations, a people without a language, without a religion, trod upon, spat upon, refused even the memory of her greatness? Who but a Habsburg, the Styrian Ferdinand?

"And is it you, you, a Bohemian, who now come to me as the envoy of a Habsburg, you who plead for Francis II., you who, if you chose, might see in me your deliverer, the restorer of Bohemia's honour and the regenerator of her ancient glories? I can give your country a place amongst the nations. Austria never will."

To Prince John of Liechtenstein, on the other hand, he had appealed as one great strategist speaking to another—the emperor of battles addressing a neglected great soldier.

"If I had had you at Eckmühl," he had said, "I should not have left you in the lurch. Was the Archduke jealous of your horsemen? On the day of battle a true general treasures each talent, even that of a rival. I created three marshals after Wagram. What honour have you received? Come, tell me," he had said taking him by the ear. "I do not see the Grand Cross of Maria Theresa on your breast. Have you left it at Totis?"

And now he had said his last word, made his last concession. The rest he would leave to fate—and Champagny!

He laughed at the sudden sarcasm and touched Solyman with the spur. For Champagny was a nonentity.

In the decision itself, a decision which would affect the destiny of nations and the lives of tens of thousands of men, he felt a kind of exhilaration. His sense of power became intoxicatingly vivid.

II

Rapid motion in the open air always quickened Bonaparte's ideas. Since giving up the game of *barres* as unsuitable for a man of forty and an emperor, riding had become

his only form of exercise. Fencing he had never loved, and he was no sportsman. Whether at Fontainebleau or Malmaison the chase had never afforded him an hour's heartfelt pleasure—unless perhaps the malicious pleasure of disconcerting by his erratic course the seriousness of Berthier as "Grand Veneur." But his joy in the open air, riding or driving, had increased, not diminished, with the years. The firmament had always been the roof of his real study. His brain became desiccated in a room; but under the azure canopy thoughts crowded in on him in swarms, nebulous sketches became vast and precise designs. What a fool Debret was, he abruptly reflected, to paint him in a gilded salon seated by a table loaded with books and maps.

"As if I were a Régent de Collège like that *cuistre* Necker!"

He rode on.

Over a tuft of pines crowning the heather-clad knoll on his left the rooks were flying. The crowing of a cock shrilled up into the afternoon stillness, but the farm was lost in the mist-veiled distances. In a neglected field, rushes and a patch of flea-bane rose beside the rank grass. Half a mile further on a swine-herd crossed his path, slouching past with his right elbow resting on his horn which was slung from his shoulder by a dirty cord. Napoleon looked at the peasant. His face was seamed and so battered by weather, hard life and cares, that it had almost lost its human expression, and he made no sign of recognition either of the Emperor or of his glittering suite.

Why should he? The bodies of his two sons, killed, one at Aspern in May, the other at Enzersdorf in July, lay under the heath of the Marchfeld, and the husband of his only daughter, pressed for the army of the Archduke John, had never returned from Poland. No man knew whether he were dead or wounded or a prisoner of war in some Russian shamble.

"There goes a villain I would rather meet here than in the forest by night," Napoleon heard one of his cortège remark. He recognised the accent of Montesquiou. It was the true Versailles accent which contrasted with that of Lannes, Augereau, Ney, as well as with his own. Davout had a touch of it; so had Berthier.

Napoleon rode on with a slack rein, his horse's head drooping.

Memory and imagination alike were now awake, and he ranged the past, the present — the campaign against the English in Belgium, the campaign in Spain, the suspicious *pourparlers* between Berlin and Vienna, Vienna and Petersburg—darting thence into the future where in the East he felt looming the gigantic war, the climax of all his wars.

It was his life-purpose, grandiose or great, outlined long ago, abandoned but never forgotten, luring him still.

"The East—there is the battle-ground of the future. A greater Pharsalia—a greater conflict than that of Cæsar and of Pompey must be fought out there!"

But there too was England; and there too was Russia. Already the Czar, his smooth ally, was intriguing with Persia against France; his Cossacks might at this hour be marching on Stamboul.

"What profit have I derived from Selim's murder? Fate has played the Czar's game."

At the name of Persia, Bonaparte's imagination, enmeshed in the romance of the world's past, Cyrus and Alexander, the romance of the world's future, which had disappeared at Acre only to rise again at Austerlitz, now lured him in thought upon thought. Egypt, Persia, India, the oldest civilisations of the world, must, with France, be made the four centres, the four great lamps of culture, of religion—Christ, Osiris, Zoroaster, Brahma. What a vision—yes, but what a plan also and what a goal! What a goal clean and hard to strive towards! Philosophy was sterile.

Whoever was right, the ideologues were always wrong,—Kant, Fichte and the Jena coteries of whom he had heard so much at Erfurt. Religion, on the contrary, was life itself, and its perennial lamp kept alive by his genius and his army of priests, who could tell what new thing might not in the future decades or the future centuries arise! Paris, Memphis, Delhi and Ispahan. . . .

A loud laugh interrupted his climbing phantasies. He looked behind him. Absorbed in musing, his slackened pace had brought him close to his escort. Some of the horses, despite their riders' efforts, were even struggling to get in front of the Arab.

Napoleon touched the grey and put a wider gap than before between himself and his escort. He had in those minutes experienced one of his best and highest moods—the consciousness of solitary power, and with this the perception of a theatre for its exercise, spectral but limitlessly vast. A harmony had been set up in all his being, evanescent but most poignant. Now by that laugh it was shattered. The proximity even of his guard that afternoon, their voices and their faces, infected the air, dragging back to earth his thought as it soared.

"What makes men laugh?" . . .

"If Lannes had but lived! In him I had a man who could answer when I spoke to him, a mind that could understand. But these others—they are traitors or egoists, imbeciles or valets. Lannes—*eh bien*, to each man his fated hour."

His mind went back to Aspern and the evening on which Lannes had received his fatal wound. He saw in imagination the swollen Danube, brown and swift, the plunging trees, and, under a storm-racked sky, the ditch on the edge of which Lannes, tired with the long day's battle, was resting, his legs crossed, his head on his hand, grieving himself for the death of a comrade, General Pouzet, whom, mortally wounded, he had seen carried past wrapped in a cloak.

When lo! humming through the evening air, comes a spent bullet, shattering both his knees.

"The hazard in things," Napoleon reflected, "the hazard in things! He escaped the sharp-shooters of Saragossa and the storming of Ratisbon, and a spent bullet finds him at Aspern!"

And with a touch of the fatalism and the fight against fatalism so strong in the Napoleonic ethics, he pressed still further his scrutiny of the inscrutable. In the consultation of physicians, if Larrey's decision to amputate had not been carried out, would Lannes have recovered? Was that decision wise? Was it even sincerely given, or, like his marshals, were his surgeons too the slaves of jealousy, and was Larrey's judgment warped by the wish to differ from Yvan?

"Bah, all is chance and all is purpose, all is accident and all is intention!"

III

Napoleon's grief for Lannes had been sincere, as sincere as any emotion that he had felt since Desaix or Muiron fell. He had thought him irreplaceable; but in an hour his place was filled and not a day had passed in which he had not felt some moment of gratification because Lannes was not there.

"Yes; he was too frank, too sudden and violent in opposition. He was vain, very touchy; at Ratisbon he had drawn his sword on Bessières, Masséna had to part them. . . . Did Charlemagne's wit detect some profit even in the death of Roland? But this is the curse which clings to power. In the death of the best-loved friend we welcome the death of a rival, and I have known many such deaths."

Their names and faces rose, shadows in the clouds—Muiron at Arcola, the best remembered, the most regretted of all; Desaix at Marengo just when victory would have made him most troublesome; Kléber in Egypt just when his

return would have been most embarrassing; and now Lannes just when his frankness was becoming too frank.

"But Bernadotte will live on, and Fouché; no spent bullet or friendly shell will rid me of these. War? The evils of war? I have seen as much hate in David's studio or in Tronchet's library as in my court or cabinet."

Napoleon from a very early period, from a date much anterior to his Letter to Buttafuoco, had read and pondered what might be named the pathology of the human mind. He had not read the *De l'Esprit* of Helvétius; but he had rediscovered for himself and made his own several of that thinker's positions. Already at eight and twenty he had come to Hamlet's maxim that "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." Everywhere, in death as in life, one dark purpose works to its end.

A swerve of his horse, which had set its foot on a snapping branch, startled Bonaparte from his reverie. He looked around, and as he gazed the beauty of the scene insensibly mastered him. He drew up on a gentle eminence.

"C'est beau!" he said to Rustum after some minutes of contemplation. The handsome young Mameluke, who alone of his escort had ventured to approach, rolled his jet eyes listlessly round the horizon, but said nothing.

The scene which Napoleon surveyed was indeed one of the fairest and most surprising in Austria. On his left, rising like an immense and noble amphitheatre, the wood-clad heights known as the Wiener Wald, robed in the melancholy glories of October. On his right, a mile and a half away, draped in a golden haze, the myriad roofs and gables, spires and domes of the city clustering around the great cathedral of St. Stephen's, whose spire in reckless slenderness rose over all as though it would scale the heavens. Northward, full in front, in a gentle depression, lay the village of Heiligenstadt, its white walls and red-tiled roofs like islets in the rolling sea of orchards and vineyards,

meadows and tufts of trees, through which a brook flow d languidly in sparkling or shadowed windings.

But Napoleon in mid-life had little real love for the beauty or poetry of Nature. To him a landscape was now the theatre for the evolution of armies. The pastoral scene in front, amid whose thickets and streams, the haunt in summer of nightingales, Beethoven in those very years had passed some of his most tragic and visionary hours, speedily bored him, and he turned to his right, studying the outlines of the city, the narrow circle of the Old City scarcely a mile in diameter and its wide skirt of suburbs encased in greenery. Yonder through the luminous haze some miles to the northward, that steady wreath of smoke should be Wagram; and sweeping southward his eye rested longer on the ruined spot where had stood the villages of Aspern and Essling and Enzersdorf, a field of graves, conquerors and conquered silent together.

A harsh reflection shattered the reverie.

"Five months ago—and I am still at Schönbrunn. Why?"

His features hardened; in his figure the strained contracted expression like that of a beast of prey alert and vigilant.

"But that city is mine. Twice in five years it has been my booty, twice I might have sacked it as Genghis did Samarcand. They may compel me to do it still!"

Everything exasperated him against Vienna—its defiance in May; the satire upon his strategy, seizing a capital before he had defeated the army; the insolence of the inhabitants; the sarcasms on his fête-day, the notorious "Zwang" acrostic, carefully interpreted to him by Savary and Sulmetter; these protracted negotiations; the secret press. Peace or war, he must inflict on that city some deadly and unforgettable insult, some unforgettable mark of his anger and of his power.

But his eye, passing from bastion to bastion, from the

spire of St. Stephen's to the hexagonal tower of the Minorites, rested upon a spot in the southern portion of the city close to the royal palace.

It was the Church of the Capuchins. Only three days ago he had stood for a long space of time in the crypt of the vault where the dust of the Habsburgs mouldered, emperor and queen, archdukes and princes, the elder and the younger line, Habsburg and Habsburg-Lorraine—Matthias and Rudolf, Charles, Leopold and Maria Theresa. And suddenly, here under the wide sky as that morning in the damp odours of corruption, the same order of ideas gripped him—the nothingness, the supreme nothingness of all that exists. Even his battles, the solidest and most enduring, the masterstroke at Ulm, the trick on Dolgorouki at Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Friedland and, but yesterday, the thunder of his hundred-gun battery over there at Wagram and, screened by its smoke and terror, Macdonald's charge sweeping through the Austrian centre, endangering victory by victory's very excess. . . .

"A smoke that vanishes, un songe léger qui se dissipe. . . ."

"What is it? Of what am I afraid? If I died to-morrow I should still be, not with Condé and Turenne, Gustavus or Frederick, but with Cæsar and Alexander. What can tarnish their splendour? What total reverse, what disaster touch me now?"

He turned his horse's head slowly and took the road back towards Schönbrunn.

He was impatient to be at work. There were letters to his ministers in Paris, letters to his generals in Spain, to be dictated.

But the curious depression of the morning increased as he once more turned towards the palace. It seemed as if from Schönbrunn itself something deadly, something hostile crept towards him stealthily yet resistlessly.

"Am I used up at forty? Is my imagination indeed moribund? Is this the beginning of the end?"

Yet at no period of his life had his contempt for other men been so overweening, his demand for an instantaneous homage to his genius so imperious. His arrogance had increased; he had become intolerant of contradiction or criticism of any kind upon any subject. A caricature which had appeared in Munich—a Corsican monkey snatching chestnuts from the fire, which England and Russia ate, "tasting all the sweeter because they're salted with French blood,"—had exasperated him for days. He resented even the laughter in Paris, where all, even God Himself, was laughed at. During the past campaign every bulletin of the Grand Army, each of the twenty-five written since April, had been travestied by the wit of the two street-corner rascals, Becoche and Galliafré. Excited by Fouché's insinuations he had seen during the same months in the prodigious success of Chateaubriand's *Les Martyrs* an insult to the conqueror of Ratisbon and Wagram, a voluntary tribute to the personal ascendancy of the exiled poet.

But his own genius? Yes; it had lost its élan, its certainty, its copious variety. He had attempted to hide this from himself, but he had known it in himself at Aspern, which was a defeat, as at Wagram, which was a victory. At Eckmühl he had for an instant felt the blinding splendour once more about him; but it vanished. He had felt the same failing power in his diplomacy; he was too nervous, he was too irritable. He had felt it even in dictating his bulletins which were stuffed with all the old phrases and all the old lies, but absolutely devoid of the old fire. His harangue to the troops on the eve of Wagram had remained a blotch and a botch. His metaphors were tasteless, his apostrophes vapid, his denunciations of his enemies' perfidy, of Austria's treachery, rang hollow to his own ears.

Napoleon never openly admitted an error; but he had too

much common sense, too strong a love of reality not to acknowledge in his own breast that he committed many. And this morning they rankled furiously. Every great line of policy during the past two years seemed a blunder—a blunder the *guet-apens* of Bayonne; a blunder the invasion of Spain; a blunder the blockade of England.

"England!" he suddenly flashed out. "Always England!"

From the very start of his career she had been the fixed irreconcilable enemy, pursuing him like a huge ironic smile —the real source of his defeats, the genius of his miscalculations and his errors. How had he ever ventured into that quagmire of physiocratism, *le blocus?* Quesnay's idea, Quesnay's and the physiocrats.

"Starve England? What madness! Starve the octopus, if you can, but how is it to be done? Stab her to the heart, England, the strangler of the globe? You cannot, for she has no heart, only a maw and her ubiquitous deadly tentacles—ships, fleets and yet more fleets, and everywhere gold."

Yes, she might retreat from Antwerp and from Flushing as from Burgos and Corunna. Like the sea, her element, she would return in hate and in irony. His very name "Napoléon" became ridiculous when pitted against that name "England"—a gaudy foam-bubble flung upon the gaunt face of an ancient cliff. How could he have dreamed of conquering England with such a nation as France behind him—noisy, fickle, blustering, vapouring France!

From his English policy his tormented fancy turned to the military errors which he had committed in the present campaign. Despite those mistakes he had quelled the Archduke Charles; but behind the Archduke he now definitely surmised a something which he could not quell, a force inexhaustible as life, mysterious, intangible. He had surmised it at Erfurt in peace; he had felt it behind the furious

assaults at Aspern, and in the sullen retreat from Wagram he had known its unconquerable stubbornness.

It was the nation. It was the people.

"Bah, Francis and Metternich dread this force more than I dread it. Yet Paris? Paris is the fever-centre of this force. For Paris is the Revolution." He sank in deeper, more sombre brooding.

Here again the recollection, the incredible recollection of error confronted him. And as its climax he evoked the violence, the frantic violence of his interview which ended in the dismissal of Talleyrand.

There too was error. Traitor as he was, the club-foot priest was invaluable; his opposition was sometimes bought, his approval never. Champagny was a *nigaud*. His acceptance and resistance meant nothing, and even his honesty was suspect. Had not his ineptitudes in the negotiations at Altenburg seemed intentional? Talleyrand would have concluded peace two months ago.

"Talleyrand is gone! The rats are quitting the sinking ship. Bonaparte is lost."

The taunting royalist witticism, reported or invented by Fouché, he had at the time disdained; but to his purged eyesight to-day it seemed laden with meaning. To Talleyrand's defection he could distinctly trace the greatest, subtlest error of all—the imprisonment of the Pope. To seize Pacca the cardinal and leave him safely tied up and gagged at Fenestrella was policy; but why had he given Miollis the order to seize the Pope also? Madness or blindness, it was the capital, the irretrievable mistake. Pius VII. was old. His gentleness and distinction had won the affection of most men and of all women. And in his conflict with himself the Pope had so blended dignity, resolution, and humility as to extort the admiration of Europe.

Yes; it was a blunder, a blunder so incredible that he could not believe that it was he who had committed it.

"And yet," he said, spurring his horse which at that moment needed no spur, "I should act in the same manner tomorrow. I am no stirrup-holder like Frederick Barbarossa! Gratitude is a name—Pius VII. crowned me, and out of Monsieur Bonaparte made me Napoleon I.; but out of Signor Chiaramonti, who made him Pius VII.? Eh? Eh? It is the time that is at fault. I should at once have created an Anti-Pope, Maury or Fesch or another. So the Fredericks acted, so the Saxon emperors, the Ottos and the Heinrichs; but the time is at fault. Heroism is no longer possible in Europe. And even against England my policy is realising itself—deadly if slow. After this—chaos. I must go on—and on. We are tied to our fates. Rest? Stop? Ask the avalanche to rest. . . ."

IV

"Whom have we here?"

Napoleon suddenly saw two figures in black standing motionless side by side near a dark patch of trees. Surprised, he looked at them. It was two priests in the Greek dress. Recognizing Napoleon, they removed their hats, shaped like the inverted heel of a boot, and bowed deeply.

Despising philosophy, but interested in every form of religion, Napoleon signed to them to approach. He knew that by the Treaty of Passarowitz every Greek resident in Vienna was exempt from the imposts levied upon foreigners. He knew also the evil character of the Greek, pilloried in the Viennese proverb, "One Greek equal to two Jews." But these were both fine-looking men, bearded, with broad open foreheads.

"You are happy in Vienna?" he enquired. "Yours is a great religion. It is the oldest form of Christianity. I esteem your Patriarch."

The priests again bowed deeply.

Then he put various other questions, enquiring their names, their ages, whether they were married, how many children they had—all this not from the wish to show his superiority, but simply because his mind struck naturally for the concrete. Driven on by the same impulses he put questions to them regarding their parishes and the villages around, the vineyards and the rotation of crops.

"You have many bad methods in Austria. England robs you. Why, for instance, do you not grow turnips? These red potatoes suit the sandy soil around Berlin but in the loamy soil by the Danube they are absurd. And why do you not plant tobacco? You are Greeks and should teach the Germans as well as the Magyars. The plantations in England have begun again. Yorkshire, its broadest county, is one tobacco-field."

The younger priest, who was the son of a farmer at Iconium, was about to answer, but uncertain whether he had understood the Emperor's rapid French, he refrained.

A few of Bonaparte's suite were impressed, the majority bored by the interview.

Then for some seconds Napoleon sat looking at the two men in silence, perhaps contrasting their sequestered uneventful lives with his own.

"Pray that your God may this day illumine your sovereign's heart, and that he may give to his people peace—peace which is the greatest of all blessings, as war is the greatest of all scourges to mankind."

And with a grave but negligent salute he rode on, once more absorbed in vexatious brooding. Schönbrunn was in sight. Behind its long frontage and the two obelisks of Paccazzi crested by the Austrian eagles with outspread wings, he saw rise from its wooded hill La Gloriette, and far behind it, the eye of his mind always taking in vast spaces, he divined the headwaters of the Drave and the glittering rampart of the Austrian Alps.

But nothing could shake off his uneasiness, for now at that very interview with the priests his mind began to forge for itself exasperating fancies.

To his overwrought nerves every incident seemed a warning sent by Destiny. "Ah," he said suddenly, "it is the thirteenth of the month; it is Friday; the word to-day is 'Timoleon' and the countersign 'Persepolis.' What an accumulation of omens! Conspiracy, death, treason and fratricidal rage. And those two priests, starting from the ground by that dark wood?"

The very priests were now an omen, heralds of ill in their black and outlandish garb. Every superstition, always on the alert in his Italian temperament, now awoke, like hounds on the track baying behind him—Corsican superstitions, memories from his youth, his own most mysterious career, always a perplexity to him. Other omens recurred to him. His faithful valet Pfeister had gone raving mad on the field of Wagram, distracted by the heat and the unparalleled cannon firing; a month later the explosion on his birthday had killed twelve men, wounding seventeen.

He wheeled his horse and glanced rapidly back, his eye ranging over the rolling landscape, doubting whether the priests were real priests and not spectres risen from the ground to daunt him.

Nothing was in sight.

"Where is Berthier? Why is he not here?" he demanded, discovering for the first time the absence of the Prince de Neuchâtel. "Stop those two priests and bring them back," he said in the same breath to Lebrun and Montesquiou, the two swiftest horsemen of his body-guard. "No; you stay here," he commanded Rustum, who, something of a spoiled child and vain of his horsemanship, was about to dart after them.

"Me go quicker," the Mameluke muttered sulkily, checking the black charger he rode that morning.

But, ashamed of his fancies, Bonaparte almost instantly dispatched two other riders to stop the first, instructing them to ascertain merely what road the priests had taken.

"If they are phantoms," he argued, "it is to my sight only that they are visible."

And heedless of the confusion and astonishment of his escort, lost in black dreams, his right knee twitching against the saddle as always in his moments of passion or unusual excitement, Napoleon waited.

Seconds passed and grew to minutes, one, two, three; then Lebrun, though the older man, heading Montesquiou by a length, was seen returning.

"Eh bien?"

"They came from Penzing and are on their way to Königstettin, thence by cross-roads to Staasdorf."

Napoleon sat for some seconds in silence, still looking in the direction from which his riders had returned.

"They are lovers of the picturesque always, ces gaillards-là, in nature or in a wench."

He gave an impatient tug at the right rein, for during the wait his grey had sidled up to Rustum's black. He rode now at a walking pace. Schönbrunn was scarcely a mile and a half away. At intervals he could see the gleam of the outspread immovable wings of the Habsburg eagles above the obelisks, surmounted by the fluttering tricolour.

Bonaparte sat heavily forward in the saddle, his head sunk on his prodigious chest, his shoulders high. His countenance had lost its expressiveness; his eyes had again the tarnished unsearchable look, like greyish glass in which we can see nothing. His face alternately riveted and repelled scrutiny, seeming now full of profound significances, now an empty mask.

CHAPTER IV

THE ASSASSIN

I

MEANWHILE, in Schönbrunn and around it and in Vienna itself, a rumour had spread that, at the noon parade, an attempt had been made on Napoleon's life. The fact was reported at several places simultaneously. In a solitary farm, eleven miles from Vienna, a swineherd who had fought against Bonaparte at Rivoli came running to his master shortly after twelve o'clock.

"The Emperor of the French is dead."

"Then God be praised," was the simple and pious answer.

It was known before one o'clock at Mödling, a village ten miles to the south of Vienna; and at Ertzen and Dornbach, hamlets lying twelve miles to the west of Schönbrunn, it was reported about the same hour.

Indeed, the rapidity with which, in days before electricity, rumour travelled recalls that paragraph of a Greek historian describing Θροῦς the spirit of Rumour, the mysterious influence which seems to move from place to place without crossing the intervening space, so incredible its speed.

The details were variously stated. In all well-informed circles, it was asserted that by the prompt intervention of General Rapp and two other officers of the suite the Emperor himself had been unaware of the danger, that the assassin had been instantly and silently hurried to the guard-

room of the palace, that the review of the wounded had not even been interrupted.

All admired this example of French decision, and it was contrasted with the dilatory methods and fuss of the Austrian gendarmerie; for the assassin, urged by religious or political fanaticism, had approached within a few feet of his unsuspicious and unarmed victim.

In Schönbrunn itself the excitement was extreme. The thousand rooms, staircases, corridors, and even the garden walks, were like a buzzing hive; but instead of with bees they swarmed with officials, servants, aides-de-camp, marshals, princes, generals, pages, valets, uniforms of every hue and arm, chasseurs, grenadiers, dragoons, voltigeurs.

About two o'clock, Duroc, the Grand Chamberlain, and Prince Berthier, who had been closeted together for twenty minutes, entered the main reception-room. The former's face had a look of haggard concern, if not grief. His attachment to the Emperor was of long standing and sincere. He had fought at Rivoli; he had stood by the First Consul on the third Nivôse when the infernal machine exploded in the Rue St. Nicaise.

To many the attack, real or imaginary, was an excitement, a curiosity; Duroc it made physically sick and ill. To the others Napoleon was an institution, a man superior to suffering; but Duroc saw him in daily life. He saw him affected like others by what he ate or drank, by the weather, the sunshine or the damp. He was the hourly witness of his weaknesses, his diseases. Others had heard in July last the rumours of epilepsy, or again in August, of insanity. Duroc knew the reality. They speculated upon his death —now above all that he could have no heir—by illness, or on the battlefield, or by poison, or as to-day by a dagger-thrust. Duroc could share none of these speculations. The Court of the Tuileries resembled, Favrol had said in disgust, Rome under Pius VI., when a black-frocked popu-

lace speculated on the death of a pope as upon a gigantic lottery, crying out "Non videbis annos Petri." To Duroc Napoleon was still as at Arcola.

"My dear Duroc," Berthier said in answer to an expostulation wrung from the Grand Chamberlain, "what is one to do? Risks he must run. Mon Dieu! do not I try to keep him within bounds?—as you have tried, Duroc, as you have tried. But what is the result?"

If Berthier's grief was less sincere his face made amends. That was grief-stricken enough. It was the ruin of a face. For in the heat and excitement the perspiration had formed little runlets everywhere amongst the powder on his cheeks.

"This may be a warning to him," Duroc said quietly. "Who is to inform His Majesty?"

"You had better do that," Berthier answered cordially. "You certainly."

Berthier, whose jealousy had steadily repressed the advance of Davout, had no jealousy of Duroc. Besides, he still smarted under Napoleon's snub, and knew that the Emperor would at once conjecture why he had attempted to speak to him after the parade.

About the large, uncouth iron stove which disfigured this charming rococo apartment, stood four general officers and two aides-de-camp, not that day on duty, but now called out by the Emperor's danger, Colonel Favrol and General Mouton, "the lion named a sheep." Mouton was fast rising in Napoleon's favour. He had slept in the Emperor's tent on the night of the conflagration which, after Claparède's bloody engagement, had burst out in Ebersdorf, burning wounded and dead alike in one hideous holocaust, and filling the air for three miles around with the smell of roasting human flesh. Mouton had the face of an Irishman, a "ranker," dirty-looking and sullen. Favrol, on the other hand, was, like Montesquiou, a man of good family,

and found himself daily outraged by the barrack brutalities of Napoleon's "rankers."

These two now stood side by side, but talking in the guarded, quiet way of men who esteem but do not trust each other; members of a profession in which intrigue was the path to advancement.

Before Favrol's eyes still floated the image of the open carriage, the profiles of the two women—the Princess Dürrenstein's wayward grace, and the sadness and energy of the Countess Amalie von Esterthal. Had she too a lover? And that lover?

II

"Mad or sane, I hope the Emperor will make short work of him," a heavy, red-faced general of cuirassiers observed to Mouton. "This attack on His Majesty may be a preliminary to an attack on the army itself. Germany is a nation of fanatics."

"That will be all right. What happened to Eschenbacher and Thell?" Mouton spoke carelessly, but his voice had so brazen a ring that it penetrated the room, echoing.

Eschenbacher and Thell were two honest bourgeois of Vienna who in May had been shot for some trivial offence against military law.

The other officers turned at Mouton's voice; some remained where they stood, others came nearer to the group about the stove.

The movement left isolated a big, lean, sunburnt general of grenadiers, heavily marked by smallpox. This was Hulin, "the stormer of the Bastille." Though a "ranker" he had neither Mouton's voice nor his aggressive geniality.

Favrol moved away. Mouton's manners grated on him

worse than Mouton's accent. But he was immediately joined by Bertrand. Bertrand was clean-shaven, fair-complexioned, and, at two and thirty, a general of division.

"What's on at the opera to-night?" he said to Favrol. "And the Austrian charmer—how's that, eh? I saw you in her rear at the parade. Any signs of a thaw or is she still polar? Both she and her Polish friend look as if they might become tropical enough. Eh? Lucky at cards, unlucky in love."

Favrol, wheeling round, said abruptly:

"What do you think will be the effect of this morning's affair? Did you see the attempt? Or the assassin himself?"

"Not the actual blow. But I am convinced I saw the fellow himself loafing at the foot of the stairs—slim and blonde as a girl. It may set us on the march from here to-morrow. It may keep us here for another six months."

Bertrand and Favrol knew very well that at this moment the secret pre-occupation of every heart in the room and in every room of this crowded palace, and in every barrack, camp or cantonment in which the attack was surmised or known, was just this question: "What will be the effect of this on the prospects of peace?"

A second later both men had a proof of it; for a cavalry officer, bright-eyed, smiling, high-complexioned, redolent of good health, showing his white teeth, came jingling his gilt spurs towards them. "Well, mon général," he said, addressing Bertrand. "What do *you* think? Is it war or peace? To me it doesn't matter a damn—Je m'en fiche. I've been in the saddle ten hours to-day, and last night I had not three hours' sleep. Serving Napoleon is like serving a devil."

"Blagueur!" said Bertrand. "A jay like you! What lively young woman kept you awake?"

"No girl at all," the younger man said seriously; "but our Lady of Spades. A beggarly queen—a very raven of a

card—not another all night! I'm now done brown! Done brown!" he repeated, as though the word summed up some aspect of his philosophy of life.

"He that would live next year must live to-day," chanted an aide-de-camp, quoting a saying of Napoleon's which at this period the latter iterated in his letters to his brother Joseph. "And he who would live to-day must have cash."

"Why," said a dragoon, "if we stay much longer the Viennese will have to eat their own rats. My servant bayonets seventy of a morning—squeak, squeak!" he said, imitating the scream of a wounded rat.

He was quartered in the city and had this instant brought a message from his own general to Nansouty. "Hot in this oven, is it not?" he muttered, taking off his helmet and wiping his forehead. His hair smelt of pomade.

And the newcomer excitedly told once more, with variations and details, the story of the attack. According to this latest version the assassin had been seen three days ago lounging at the foot of the stairs, waiting then to perpetrate the dastardly act.

"Longer, longer! Seven days ago . . . " interrupted Mouton. "No, but let me speak. It was last Friday at this very hour. I was on duty and I saw the fellow as plainly as I see Dafour yonder; but that morning the Emperor, instead of descending by the right as he usually does, went down by the left. That choice saved his life. But this morning, I ask, what saved him? Who can tell me that?"

"Mon Dieu—who is that?" muttered the dragoon in a stage aside.

From an inner room a man in a cuirassier's uniform advanced a step, then stood motionless. He was of uncertain age, yet, like nearly every man in the room, under forty. His strangely furtive yet arrogant and penetrating glance

seemed to take in the conversation in every quarter of the room.

Duroc lifted his head and looked at the sinister visitor quietly. Berthier took no notice of him. After a few seconds, but still without a word of greeting or courtesy to any man, he disappeared.

Bertrand approached Hulin.

"Savary becomes unbearable. He can be civil only to the Emperor."

Hulin shrugged his right shoulder curiously. It was the action of the old linesman hitching up his knapsack.

"Yes; he looks an ill-omened bird, does he not? But he loves this day's work, and its sequel. We hate it, we others, yet we consent."

III

A clatter of hoofs outside, the champing of bits and the voices and laughter of a gay cavalcade came through the open windows. The stove had been lighted; the two iron statues used for heating the hall were also glowing, and the soldiers, accustomed to the bivouac, had flung the windows wide.

"It is the Emperor."

The change was instantaneous and, though usual, still magical. Every figure took a different attitude, many making a desperate effort to assume the poses, to recollect the gestures studied by Napoleon's orders under M. Gardel, director of the Opera ballet in Paris, the right foot drawn back, the head and shoulders respectfully bowed. Voices were lowered, but at the same time the excitement on every face was augmented. One minute passed, a second and then a third. Outside the riders had not dismounted, but silence had crept over them; even the horses appeared to have caught the infection, for the jingling of a rein or the

champing of the bits occurred at rarer and rarer intervals. Within the room the malaise, the impatience became intolerable.

Had something happened to Napoleon, after all? Mon Dieu, was it his dead body that the cortège was bringing home?

Someone went to the window and peeped.

It was Berthier.

He was heard to exchange a rapid sentence or two with Duroc, and arm in arm they were about to proceed downstairs, when the double door was flung violently open and, white as death, but with his greyish eyes almost black in their burning intensity, Napoleon appeared.

His glance, which passed from face to face—each man felt it, like the cold touch of a lance probing his inmost thought.

The silence became profounder. Then rushing straight upon Berthier, who stood with his arms folded in ridiculous imitation of his master, Napoleon exclaimed, his voice thick and shrill with passion:

"What is this I hear? Speak!"

But before Berthier could answer two other figures, both in the uniform of the chasseurs of the Guard, appeared in the doorway behind the Emperor. It was Savary, duc de Rovigo, and General Rapp.

"Ah, mon brave Rapp—you here too?" Napoleon cried, abandoning Berthier. "Savary tells me that I owe my life to you. What is the meaning of it? Recount, recount!"

But for the grey pallor of Napoleon's face it might have been thought that he spoke the words in sarcasm or in insult, so like a sneer was the tone in which he jerked out the rapid interpellation.

Rapp, disconcerted by this brusque reception, narrated the incident, but slowly and confusedly. He was evidently

labouring under strong feeling, and, as always on such occasions, his Rhenish accent betrayed itself and his words became entangled.

"Come, come!" Napoleon said more kindly, "débarbouillez-vous,—clear the mud from your mind and speak distinctly! At what hour precisely was this, and where exactly was I standing? How did the assassin's intention escape me?"

"Your Majesty was engaged with the Guard," Berthier broke in.

"Let Rapp speak," Napoleon said coldly.

Rapp began again. His resentment had vanished; his attachment to his master and that master's danger alone were in his heart. His face became animated. His fine soldierly figure held erect, he expressed in a few words his indignation, his concern, his devotion to the Emperor and his gratitude to God.

Rapp was not yet forty, though three years older than Savary. Like the latter he was devoured by a fever of ambition, but unlike the latter he was scrupulous in his means of realizing that ambition. Constantly disappointed, constantly seeing men inferior to himself pass him in the race for titles, riches, rank, he had the reputation of being unlucky or evil-starred. Whilst men like Duroc, Murat and Berthier passed through a hundred battles without a scratch, Rapp never entered a battle and seldom a combat without a misfortune of some kind, a bullet wound, a sword-thrust or a fall from a horse. His open and independent character interfered with his advance, and thus at nine and thirty he was only a general and for the last weeks only, a count, an honour won by his gallantry at Aspern and by arduous exertions in Lobau. The great moment of Rapp's life had been the moment at the battle of Austerlitz in which with seven hundred men he had charged the Imperial Guard of the Czar himself, had cut a

gap into that famous body of horsemen, veterans of Suvarow, and, wheeling round when he was about to be enclosed, had forced a desperate path through the enveloping grey-coats and covered with wounds and blood had returned leisurely to his position, and later on in the December evening had taken part in the grand pursuit. The frost had congealed his wounds. But before he bivouacked he had been sent for by Napoleon in person and, covered with frozen blood as with a glittering mail of glory, he had presented himself before the Emperor in his tent. Napoleon's words still at times rang in his ears. After Jena, however, a change had come over Rapp. He was nicknamed "the German"; the heavy moustache which he obstinately wore in an army whose officers were mostly, like the Emperor, clean-shaven, or, like Davout and Savary, clean-shaven on the lip and chin but whiskered barely to the lobe of the ear, seemed to justify the nickname. He could not explain it himself, but he was an Alsatian, and it might have been that the humiliation of Germany stirred some lingering or inherited reminiscences of his race in his blood. He had been at Eylau and at Friedland, but he had never again found quite the rapture of that moment at Austerlitz, and disappointment or jealousy or a secret rancour or an ill-quenched German patriotism or a republicanism only half dead had aggravated his naturally sardonic temperament.

IV

"And where now is the assassin?" Napoleon at length said, interrupting Rapp in the midst of his narrative; for as if embarrassed by the Emperor's approval, nods and encouraging words, Rapp, instead of answering briefly, had plunged into irrelevancies, digressions and repetitions—what Savary had said, what Berthier had thought, what

Mouton had proposed, what Bertrand had answered. "Answer each question as I ask it, and that question only. Where is the prisoner?"

"In the guard-house of the west wing."

"But how came you to suspect that he meant to assassinate me?"

The tone and the look which accompanied these words startled every hearer.

If there were a snare or treachery in the question, or if the "Corsican touch" made itself felt, Rapp ignored it. His honest limited countenance was undisturbed.

"Something in his persistence," he said deliberately, "his earnest and exalted mien——"

But like the swift vicious glimmer of unexpected lightnings came the interruption:

"Since when has an earnest look or an exalted mien become the mark of a criminal?"

"Your Majesty! In Germany——"

Rapp appeared about to begin a digression. Napoleon stopped him again.

"Answer my question."

The false calm of Napoleon's accent was well known. Every man shifted uneasily and every heart that had a secret felt as if the covering were lifted and those glaucous eyes were gazing in upon it.

Berthier's left arm dropped by his side; his right remained helplessly across his chest as if held in an invisible sling. Duroc glanced pleadingly but furtively at his master. Savary's mean-looking, close-set eyes became attentive, and straining his head slightly forward to listen, the line of his long nose seemed to reach his upper lip and his resemblance to Leonardo's Judas became more apparent.

Impassive, Napoleon awaited the reply.

Rapp did not at once proceed. This was not the Emperor whom he knew, this was not the master who habit-

ually addressed him as "mon brave Rapp." Before this accusing judge it was not the murderer who was impanelled, it was he, Rapp, or it was Savary or it was one of his fellow-officers, the aides-de-camp, generals and marshals standing around in bewildered or self-condemned apprehension. What had seized Napoleon?

It was characteristic of the impression made by Napoleon even on his most faithful ones that whilst there was no sublimity to which they did not imagine his genius capable of mounting, there was also no meanness and no crime to which they could not imagine it stooping.

Rapp struggled to realize the situation; but he could only image, incongruously, the Emperor's reception of the two couriers bringing the news of Talavera. The first Napoleon had accused of being in league with the English and of forging the report of Wellington's victory. The second he had rewarded for an unusually rapid ride from Bayonne by throwing him into a dungeon in Vienna. And there, for anything Rapp knew, the unfortunate messenger still lay. Was Napoleon for this morning's devotion about to reward him in the same manner? Or was he doubting his word, or was he doubting Savary's, or had Savary given a distorted account?—for Savary was known to be undermining Fouché's power and suspected of undermining everybody's. Was he, Rapp himself, perhaps the victim of a got-up job of Savary's? Was the attempt at assassination part of a faked conspiracy? Or, if the conspiracy were real, did Napoleon suspect that someone in this room was in league with the assassin, and would his answer lead to that traitor's conviction?

That answer, cost what it would, he now determined to give. He spoke.

"I observed that whilst the assassin held out the petition in his *left* hand he carried his right thrust in the breast of his coat and seemed to clutch a weapon there."

"You have searched him?"

"Yes, sire."

"And the result?"

"We found on him a purse with three florins, a miniature, some papers, and—this, your Majesty."

Every face was changed and suppressed exclamations of horror burst from one after another of the witnesses of this extraordinary scene.

The weapon which Rapp stood holding out towards the Emperor was certainly formidable enough, fit even in an unsteady or faltering hand to inflict a deadly injury. It had been a table-knife; it was now a dagger. Both edges had been ground to a long, fine point, a blade of about nine inches set strongly in a coarse haft of unpolished ash.

Napoleon alone did not blench. His manner became if possible quieter. It was the look almost of gaiety which St. Hilaire had seen on his face at Ostrolenka and which Davout had described in a letter to his wife from Auerstädt as his "battle look."

The Emperor took the dagger from Rapp's hand, glanced along the blade, then placed the point first against the white full flesh of his wrist, then against the deep green of the sleeve of his coat, continuing his scrutiny of the steel. Apparently he did not detect the marks that he sought, for he flung the weapon clattering on the table laden with vases and precious ornaments beside him, with the remark:

"The daggers of England find me even here. Take it to Géraudin; ask him to test whether the point is poisoned, whether the Cabinet of St. James's is imitating that of the Borgias. En vérité, Canning goes further than Pitt."

Then, one suspicion hunting another out of his brain, he turned harshly to Rapp.

"How comes it that the criminal spoke only to you?"

Napoleon in putting this question looked at Berthier, then at Savary, and then again at Rapp, and waited.

Duroc intervened, placatingly as always.

"The Prince de Neuchâtel does not know German and the duc de Rovigo speaks it imperfectly."

The storm suppressed till then flamed out.

"Have my armies thrice conquered Germany and only one man in all my staff knows the language of the countries we have overrun?"

Duroc was heard to say something of the Count Daru. The latter had been with the Emperor at Erfurt and had intervened tactfully, though late a little, when Napoleon, that patron of the arts, had addressed to the author of *Faust*, *Egmont*, *Goetz* and *Iphigenie* the naïve questions—"Have you written any tragedies? Are you married? How many children have you? How old are you? If you come to Paris I will suggest subjects to you better than any you can find at Weimar—the death of Cæsar, for instance."

But the Emperor's outburst against his officers' ignorance of German was only a preliminary. He now resumed his inquisitory and turned once more to Rapp.

"And to you, monsieur the professor of German, what did the assassin say?" he enquired with an adder-like smile. "What harm have I done him that he wishes to kill me? And who is he? Is he English?"

"He speaks German," Rapp answered, "and says he comes from Erfurt, but to every other question I asked him he had but one answer, 'Das kann ich dem Napoleon selbst nur sagen'—'That I will tell to Napoleon himself only.'"

The Emperor did not immediately continue. He seemed at once inquisitive and troubled by this evidence of resolution.

"He wishes to see me then?" he said at last.

"Sire, he is unshakable and will speak to no one but to you."

Napoleon glanced at Berthier and then at Duroc, but it

was not a look which either of them could fathom or attempt to answer.

"Bring him here," he said briefly after a pause.

V

Savary, accompanied by two aides-de-camp, left the room. For a second or two there was a buzz of conversation, but the tension of nerves which every man felt had scarcely diminished, and again silence fell.

Napoleon began to walk up and down with his hands behind his back, his head bent, his brow unmarked by anxiety, but wearing an expression of intense thought. His mind had gone back to the incidents of his ride, to the cloud which had weighed on him when he wakened that morning, to the hesitancy which had marked his interview with Liechtenstein, to the omens or presages which had pursued him throughout the day—his reflections on looking across to the field of Wagram, and his meeting with the two priests. Within him, he reasoned, death had closed mysteriously in a conflict with life, and these premonitions had marked the phases of that conflict. But since his twenty-fifth year he had lived cheek by jowl with death, sleeping night by night, so to speak, on the edge of a grave. Recently his mind had taken habitually to thinking of his own death and the manner of it, and, obscurely foreboding that with his supernatural luck he should not die on the battlefield, he had turned to the thought of assassination and spoke much of Cæsar's death, picturing himself dying in that manner. Who could tell that Murat, Fouché, Talleyrand and Junot had not included some such act in their conspiracy of the preceding November?

"No, this is not in my destiny," he decided suddenly, his lips moving though not a sound escaped them. "Others may be assassinated like Kléber or Paul I. I shall die

only on the battlefield. Destiny, the nature of things, all is in that—what we are or shall be."

At a stir that to his strung nerves sounded like a crash, he turned. In the doorway stood Savary, and, between two gendarmes, his hands tied behind his back, Napoleon saw a tall, slim boy, well-made, with blonde hair, blue eyes and a general expression at once in face and figure that suggested a girl masquerading in boy's clothing. Nothing in him was English, and his voice when he answered Savary, who, after examining the cords which tied his hands behind his back, commanded him to advance, dispelled the illusion that the prisoner was a girl. His stock was torn, and under the sunburnt face and chin the neck was very white. The rest of his dress also showed traces of a struggle; for he had fought furiously even after his arrest and had indignantly resisted being searched.

Napoleon, whose purpose appeared now to be to cast over the whole affair a semblance of unimportance or comedy, looked at the prisoner with an air of incredulity, even smilingly. "What is your name?" he said briefly but not unkindly.

The boy did not answer. Napoleon frowned.

"He does not understand your Majesty," Duroc said, intervening. "He speaks only German."

"Ah! Who then? Toujours le brave Rapp!"

Rapp stepped forward, and addressing the boy began: "His Majesty the Emperor of the French desires to ask——"

Napoleon stopped him.

"Address him in my person as if I were actually speaking to him, and quit that galimatias."

The interview then proceeded, Napoleon putting the questions straight to the prisoner, Rapp translating them straight into German, very harsh and Alsatian in its accent against the boy's soft, Suabian, lapsing patois.

Napoleon repeated his question,—"What is your name?"

"Friedrich Staps."

"Stabs? How do you spell it?"

Rapp transliterated the boy's answer.

"How old are you?" Napoleon proceeded.

"Seventeen." And then after a second's reflection he added, "I was seventeen in March last," as though wishing to claim for himself the utmost age possible.

Napoleon looked at him searchingly. He did not seem of peasant birth; he might have been, rather, a student, or a page in the house of one of the Austrian nobility, whose servants at that period were often selected from the bourgeois families. On the other hand, his accent was not that of Vienna.

"And your home? And what is your father's occupation?"

"I live at Erfurt. My father is a pastor at Naumburg."

"You are a Thuringian then?" As though struck by a thought Napoleon said quickly, "You saw me at Erfurt in November—nearly a year ago?"

"I did."

There was a pause. That question and that answer hovered above an abyss of tragedy from which the accuser not the accused wished to avert his eyes. Abruptly Napoleon resumed the original course of his questions.

"Of what religion is your father—Romanist or Reformed?"

"He is a Lutheran."

"And your mother?"

"My mother is dead."

"And the miniature which was found in your possession?"

"Meine Geliebte—my sweetheart's."

"Ah, you young hot-head," Napoleon suddenly burst out, "what disaster you have brought upon her and upon your father and upon all your family! Why have you done this thing? What injury have I done you? Answer me,

and remember that upon your answer depends not only your own life or death but the shame or fortune of her you love—of all you love."

"They will not be ashamed of me. They will only regret that I have not succeeded."

The words were assured; but the manner was hesitating. At Erfurt he had seen Napoleon surrounded by Germans, his satellites. He had seen even Goethe walk along the linden avenue arm in arm with Marshal Lannes and apparently proud of his companion—the Roland of this new Charlemagne.

Napoleon, as though divining his prisoner's inmost thought, said suddenly, but so softly that it was like the rebuke of a friend:

"And yet you wished to assassinate me?"

"I did, because you are the enemy of Germany."

"The enemy of Germany? Yet you saw me at Erfurt, attended by your princes, your kings, your nobles, your poets, your men of science, your priests, your pastors? Why then do you call me the enemy of Germany? No; but answer."

"They hated you even whilst they flattered you or made peace with you. I wished to deliver them and to deliver my country." Then in a voice of sombre and exalted determination the young Thuringian continued: "I have failed. But there are ten thousand behind me. One will arise and do what I have failed to do."

"Ah? En vérité?"

The boy's last words had an exaggerated if not a false air. Yet they did not resemble words learned by rote.

Napoleon considered him attentively and again he changed his tactics; for he had now begun to regard this extraordinary youth as an adversary whom he wished to defeat on his own ground. This he could only achieve by convincing him that he was in error.

"What books do you read?"

"History."

"Whose history?"

"Schiller's."

"Skiller's? I do not know him."

He looked around. Daru, who had made himself familiar with German literature, could have easily solved the Emperor's perplexity; but to-day he was at Znaim supervising some orders relative to the accoutrement of the Fifth Corps, Masséna's.

"You are young," Napoleon said, trying another tack; "and the young read poetry. Whose poetry do you read?"

"Schiller's."

"Skiller? Comment? Again Skiller! Who is this Skiller? Is it a pen-name? Was he at Erfurt?"

He looked interrogatively and angrily at Rapp; but Rapp, if he had heard of the author of *Die Räuber* and *Wilhelm Tell*, knew no more of the author of the *Revolt of the Netherlands* and *The Thirty Years' War* than did Berthier or Duroc. No one could tell Napoleon who "Skiller" was. Was he perhaps a political incendiary—one of the scores whose pamphlets had been seized by his police and, under Fouché's orders, translated and abbreviated for his private study?

Quick as light Napoleon's mind fastened on this hypothesis, and thinking to confuse the prisoner and extort the truth, his suspicion leapt out in the next question:

"You are one of the Illuminati? You wish to imitate Brutus? A German Brutus! What madness!"

But the boy denied that he even knew what an Illuminat was.

"But Germany! You believe in the destiny of Germany and are prepared to die for that belief? You are very singular!"

He laughed his mirthless, shrill Corsican laugh. Staps made no answer.

Hulin, who now stood with Berthier in the inner circle about the Emperor, had become morbidly interested in the interrogatory. For in this boy's face, bearing and action he saw something that unaccountably reminded him of Camille Desmoulins and that amazing day, the 12th July, when from the Boulevard in front of the Café de Foy he gave to the citizens of Paris and to Europe the insignia of Liberty—the green cocarde. Hulin was himself young again; there was electricity in the air and Freedom's war-thunder in his blood and his arteries; battle-cries of triumph were splitting the heavens, the shouting of an emancipated people storming the Bastille, the citadel and the symbol of the despotism crushing the world.

Yet he had been one of the foremost to hail in Bonaparte a greater than Danton or Desmoulins, a greater than Mirabeau or Hoche, than Marceau or Barnave.

But now, this instant, here in the palace of the Habsburg tyrants, another and a ghastly memory assailed him—a secret shame, an enduring remorse, over which his perplexed mind for the past five years had brooded and brooded. It was the part that under the Consul Bonaparte's orders he himself had played in the murder of the duc d'Enghien. And as the picture of the Bastille faded another picture took its place—the March night at Valenciennes, the open grave, the firing-party and the fosse, the trial, the murder and the torchlight burial—the last of the Condés thrust into that ignoble sepulchre.

A fearful presentiment seized him. He turned aside and with an immense weight upon his brow and shoulders he stood leaning by a window.

VI

Meanwhile, Napoleon had perceived the error he had made in conducting this enquiry before so many witnesses.

He could not now doubt the reality of the danger which he had run. This was no faked-up plot, nor was it the hysteria of the beautiful but depraved Countess Ortski, Lord Paget's mistress, who had bought a dagger from a jeweller in the Ludwiggasse and, pretending an assignation with the French Emperor, had declared to everyone in the shop willing to listen, "This night Austria shall be avenged." Upon being informed of the occurrence Bonaparte had contented himself with remarking, "The noble Countess confounds the parts of Rahab and Judith," and all Vienna had laughed and for a day the French Emperor had been popular. But this he had neither the wish nor the power to treat lightly. The assassin had come as a petitioner, and, at Schönbrunn, he had always been willing to consider petitions; that morning, too, he had been unarmed, and though the secret coat-of-mail he habitually wore might have defended his breast, his throat and face were exposed to an assailant who had had the craft to get within a few feet of him. Napoleon now distinctly remembered the vicious glitter of steel from which the sudden entry of the wounded from Mölk had diverted his attention.

Yes, the wing of Azrael had brushed past him, and nearer than at Ratisbon, though that was near.

And, always various in his emotions as in his projects, Napoleon felt a new impulse rise within him. It was the desire to turn to profit the mistake which he had made in thus examining Staps in public. It was the desire to convince once more the assassin and his own officers of the greatness and supernatural character of his destiny, in which he himself at this period, with a mixture of calculation and mysticism, most deeply believed. For might not the fanatic's words have awakened some slumbering doubts of that destiny in the minds of his listeners—in Republicans like Hulin, for instance, in half-convinced Royalists like Favrol and Montesquiou, in the advocates of a peace policy

like Berthier and Rapp, Masséna and Davout, anxious only to enjoy in security the riches and honours they owed to him? He felt too all the injured man's desire to refute unjust calumny. He felt also the tyrant's implacable, primitive impulse to strike to earth his accuser.

These thoughts had not occupied Napoleon's brain two seconds of time when, to his astonishment, the young Thuringian burst into a torrent of unintelligible words. Napoleon forgot his part and turning to Rapp he asked angrily: "What is the scélérat saying?"

"You have broken every condition of Pressburg. You lied: you perjured yourself: you extorted 20,000,000 gulden beyond the stipulated sum: you did not withdraw your troops though you swore to withdraw them: you retained the fortresses in Friuli and forced an open passage into Dalmatia. What right had you to threaten my Emperor when he attempted to make every man a soldier? Is not every man in France a soldier? You, you only are the cause of this bloodshed and this fury of war!"

These accusations were not spoken consecutively, but collected by Rapp from the young Thuringian's indignant utterances.

In an instant Napoleon was in the whirl of self-defence.

A political crowd Napoleon could never dominate nor even address, as Brumaire had proved; but a single individual with a crowd looking on—there was the field of his oratory, as his brothers and his own ministers and the ambassadors of foreign nations—Metternich, for instance, in the memorable scene in February last, and Lord Whitworth at the rupture of the Peace of Amiens—had experienced. The stage was now set for a similar scene.

"I am the exécuteur testamentaire de la Révolution. I wish nothing but the good of humanity. How then could I be the enemy of your country? Are not the Germans men? You have studied history, you know the causes of

wars; for history is the only philosophy; it is the invisible axis upon which eternity revolves. Why did Austria raise half a million men as soon as I was beyond the Pyrenees? English gold and the criminal folly of your Stadions and Maximilians led your Emperor astray. These are the true disturbers of the peace of nations. I alone can give tranquillity to Europe and the world. Why then do you wish to assassinate me?"

The young Thuringian gazed at him in amazement. He was alternately fascinated and repelled by the changes in Napoleon's expression, the rapidity of his utterance, the raucous Corsican accent thridding along the syllables, the trembling of his left leg, the convulsive movement of the lower part of the face, the gleam of small white teeth above all, by the thrust forward of the tremendous chin, which gave a wild-beast appearance to the countenance. He forgot himself and did not understand a syllable of Rapp's interpretation.

But the waiting silence, the fiery impatience in Bonaparte's eyes, showed him that he was meant to answer. He therefore repeated his former statement.

"You are the enemy of the world. Had I destroyed you I should have won undying glory and set Germany free."

"Comment? After what I have said? You must be mad, or ill."]

And again going out of his rôle he addressed himself to Rapp.

"Repeat to him that I wish to give peace and unity to Europe and happiness to all men, that the princes and rulers of his country are my friends, and as he is a reader of poetry and a student, tell him that the professors of his universities and M. Wieland and M. Goett (*i.e.*, Goethe), have accepted from me the Legion of Honour."

Here the prisoner listened attentively to Rapp, who now spoke slowly, distinctly enunciating his words; and as he

proceeded the boy's face clouded, and when he heard of the Legion of Honour accepted by Goethe his head sank. He knew the reverence with which Schiller looked up to the greatest poet of the German tongue, and at Erfurt with a kind of awful reverence he had looked forward to the seeing of Goethe for the first time. With a sick misery he recollected once more the day on which he had seen him walking arm in arm with a French marshal under the lime trees of the esplanade. He had looked for that marshal amongst Napoleon's guards on his first visit to Schönbrunn and he had been told that he had died in battle. The recollection seemed to confirm the hideous assertion that he now heard for the first time, and under what circumstances! He saw again Goethe's figure, erect and majestic, and his countenance like that of a god in its calm and in its inscrutable serenity. Could that lofty spirit indeed have accepted a decoration from the dwarf there who had barked unmeaning words at him? There must, he reasoned, be some explanation—a vision beyond his reach. Goethe could not be a time-server or the flatterer of brutish power. But he was too tired to think. He had not slept for three nights, nerving himself for his great task, his "sacrifice," the deed which God Himself had laid upon him, the ordeal against which he had struggled, resisting the angel of God. For he was young and loved his life and loved beautiful things, poetry and the song of birds and the long day's dreaming and the vistas which his Wanderjahre opened up before him when his years of apprenticeship at Erfurt should be terminated. But all this was now over; his course was finished. He had obeyed the high command: he had failed, and he had now only to die.

A voice roused him from his reverie.

It was Napoleon's, and it was instantly followed by Rapp's interpretation, addressed to him once more in the first person.

"If I pardon you, if I give you your liberty, will you acknowledge your error and will you give up these frantic principles? Also will you tell me the names of those who instigated or hired you to attempt this crime? You are young; you may have many happy years to live, marriage with the woman you love, and success. Why should you surrender all? You are young to die. Give up the names of your accomplices."

The insult was like the lash of a whip. The prisoner raised his head which like that of an abashed girl had sunk on his breast. The blue eyes flashed with an extraordinary fire and he spoke now with an energy that thrilled his meaning across the foreign words to Napoleon himself and to the heart of every man in that room.

"I repent nothing: I regret nothing, except that I have failed to kill you. I have no accomplices and no instigators. I have been in Vienna eleven days and I have not spoken to anyone except to the landlord in whose house I lodge. This deed was not my seeking. Two months ago God laid this command on me, but at that time I did not wish to obey. Night by night I prayed to my heavenly Father that I might not have this thing to do; yes, I hardened my heart, I wept and entreated that it might be given to another. Then God became angry and I was most wretched, for I was estranged from my God, my Father in heaven was angry with me. And I swore a dreadful oath that if He would but forgive me and be reconciled to me, I would do His will. If you set me free to-day or to-morrow or in a year or at any time I would still seek to kill you; for you are the enemy of God and of all men; yes, you are a tyrant, the oppressor of Germany, and to kill you is to serve my country and to pacify my offended God."

It was Napoleon's turn to flinch. Disconcerted, he stood for some seconds silent. He looked scrutinizingly at the speaker, and with a cold smile said briefly:

"No one instigated you? You have no accomplices, you say? Who then are the ten thousand behind you? You are delirious. You contradict yourself."

But mastered by his own impatience and by a new and more plausible theory which had taken possession of him, he did not wait for the answer, but without transition and without a gesture, gave the order:

"Send for Corvisart."

The boy tugged at his bonds as though he would have drawn his hands across his eyes—a pathetic, confused gesture. It was not tears; but a cloudiness that came in front of his thoughts. He could not see the answer to Napoleon's accusation of self-contradiction. He knew that there was no contradiction; that in saying that ten thousand stood behind him he meant to express his conviction of Germany's resolve to destroy the tyrant in one way or in another. He was about to say this, he had even turned to Napoleon, but an immense fatigue came down on him—what did it matter what that dwarf with the huge unshapely chest and head thought or said or did?

VII

No history illustrates more vividly the tendency of a high cause to work fanaticism in the mind than that of Friedrich Staps.

Born in 1792, at Eisenach in Thuringia, he had passed his boyhood partly in his native city under the shadow of the Wartburg, partly at Naumburg. The features of his home and school life were the features habitual at that period in every German pastor's family—simple and pure manners, deep piety, cleanliness, truth-speaking and reverence. His father had studied enough Latin and Greek to make the heroes of Livy and Plutarch a little nearer and more vivid than they can ever be to the reader

totally ignorant of the classics, and he early made the names of Leonidas and Miltiades as familiar to the boy as those of Luther and Melancthon, Œcolampadius and Zwingli.

As a child Friedrich was sickly but impetuous, undisciplined and wayward; yet at nine he had learned at his mother's knees to repeat her favourite passages from Klopstock's *Messias*. But the religious emotion kindled by the subject and the solemn rhythm of the verses became already in his boyhood secondary to the pride that as a Thuringian he felt for Germany's great poet. This pride became an enthusiasm as the years passed. His reading extended itself; he became acquainted one by one with the living writers of the golden age of German poetry—Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Jacobi, Goethe—and the fixed if secret resolve took possession of his mind as he grew towards manhood to take his place amongst that sacred band. He too would be a poet.

Suddenly the horror burst over Germany. Within ten months the entire German race, so to speak, was subject to one of the bloodiest inundations in human annals.

The effect of the defeats of 1805 and 1806, from Ulm to Jena, on the young Thuringian was harrowing. He could not eat; he could not sleep. His studies and his hopes were abandoned. He went about the village or the woods drooping and listless. Then the change came. The fragments of a diary written three years later have preserved to us the nature of this change.

"From the Rhine to the Oder, from the Baltic to the Danube, I looked and I saw everywhere men in chains. I saw Germany like a beautiful woman in an Eastern slave market with her head bent before a savage and insulting tyrant. An invisible sword was already by my side. I determined to set her free."

The romantic and wild scenery of his early home,

steeped in the legends of the Middle Age, minnesinger and crusader, and during his holidays long visits to his mother's kindred at Detmold near the Teutoberg and the field of the Hermannsschlacht, scene of the heroism of Arminius and the destruction of Varus and his legions, stimulated the emotions of anger, resolution and despondency which alternately convulsed the boy's mind. What German could walk in the templed gloom of those woods and return to his home the contented thrall of a Bonaparte?

Poverty and the necessity of choosing a means of livelihood, for the pastor was not rich and there were five other children, tore Friedrich for a time from his broodings; he refused to study theology, "feeling that his country would yet demand from him a service incompatible with a pastor's career." But he abandoned at the same time the cherished dream of being a soldier. Of what use was it to become a soldier? The very armies of Germany might at any moment be ordered to enroll themselves beside the hosts of the tyrant. Yet every thought of his mind was of a German uprising and of the deliverance of his country by war. The poetry of Schiller, especially the dramas of *Die Yungfrau* and *Wilhelm Tell* gave precision to his fluctuating aspirations. And when he was sixteen he saw in the secret society of the Tugendbund or League of Valour a pledge of the practical realization of his most ardent hopes.

Suddenly blow on blow struck those hopes to the ground. Stein, in whom he had seen at once the craft and the heroism of Arminius, was flying into exile, no man knew whither; Hardenberg had been bought; the diplomat Haugwitz, like the priest Dalberg, had always been a shuffler; the spirit of the heroic Queen of Prussia was broken; the princes of Germany were vying with each other in banishing the "patriots," or in surrendering to the tyrant's vengeance all suspected of sharing the aims of the League of Valour. And amidst this panic of treason and defection

came the appalling actual defeats of 1809 and the suppression of the premature revolts of Schill and Brunswick. Midnight once more settled over Germany, and this time it seemed for ever. Prussia was a second Poland. The land of Frederick was partitioned and every free spirit banished. Würtemburg, the home of Suabian heroism, was handed over to the tyrant's brother. Saxony, Bavaria, the Rhine region, were appanages of the conqueror's splendour. Austria, bleeding to death from the hideous stabs of Aspern-Essling and Wagram—what could Austria effect? And the conqueror was still in his prime and his legions were growing in multitude year by year. If he lived another ten years, would there be a refuge for freedom on this planet?

The shadow of Napoleon loomed to his ardent imagination more portentous than the half-fabulous names of Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar. A newer and darker design gradually took complete possession of the young Thuringian's soul—the design of murdering the tyrant. War and open revolt were useless; for in this Napoleon there was something daimonic. Such a deed was unprecedented in German history, but to Staps' inflamed imagination the Napoleonic tyranny was, in its corroding shame, unprecedented not only in German but in human history. It was not a crime. Many of the most shining names in history were those of tyrannicides, and with a glow of ardour which lasted for weeks Friedrich now recollected his boyish enthusiasm for the verses which enshrine the memory of Harmodius, the murderer of Peisistratos, the tyrant of Athens.

> "I will wreathe my sword with the myrtle's leaves,
> The sword that reached the tyrant's heart."

When, however, he turned from the conception to the execution of his murderous design, horror seized him, and when he conquered that horror and saw the glory of the

deed in the dazzling light of old battlefields and heard his own name spoken in wonder by millions of liberated Germans, a sense of his own incapacity and the innumerable difficulties in his way roused again the very horror that he had recently conquered. All was despondency, and, like the poet Kleist two years later, Friedrich Staps thought of self-destruction as a means of escape from his own intolerable misery and the misery of Germany.

The gloom within the young Thuringian's mind was aggravated by the events of 1809. Austria had come forth, and Austria had fallen. The English victories in Spain might all be lies; they were contradicted in every French newspaper. The one thing certain was that their armies under Sir John Moore had run like hares the instant Napoleon crossed the Pyrenees.

"Night must it be ere Friedland's star will burn."

Had Napoleon after Znaim concluded the treaty and returned to France; had he even left Germany in August, Friedrich Staps might have ended his days by suicide or sunk into obscurity. But July became August and August September and still the tyrant lingered at Schönbrunn—there within a day's journey—there within reach of a dagger. Was there not in this something metaphysical?

His purpose flamed up again. And it flamed up in a transfigured glory. The cause of the transfiguration is hidden. Nothing in his manuscripts reveals the process. It may have been a chance study of the Old Testament. It may have been a fresh reading of Schiller's *Die Yungfrau.* It may have been a sermon preached by Oberlin. The result is clear. The God of his father's religion and of his own childhood, the God of whom he had learned in his mother's talk when the hush of twilight fell with sacred mysteriousness over river and valley, added His mandate

to that of Tyrtæus and the example of Roman Brutus. The Lord God of Hosts spoke to him at Erfurt as He had spoken to Joan Darc at Domremy—"Go forth, Friedrich Staps, and give freedom to thy fatherland! Go forth and strike down the evil one!"

The new design thus hallowed he did not hide in his own breast entirely. Under the pledge of awful secrecy he revealed his divine mission to Frederike Neumann, sprung, like himself, from a pastor's family.

She went home, and whether in weakness, or, infected by his heroism, desirous of sharing his glory, she informed her mother.

Horror-struck, the latter communicated the design to the pastor himself, and Staps was forbidden the house. The girl was at the same time sent to a distant province.

Staps was thus left to execute his fearful design alone.

VIII

Meantime, waiting for Corvisart, the buzz of conversation once more filled the room.

Emotions had crystallized, judgments were expressed. General Hedouville, one of Napoleon's escort, a Frenchman with the soul of a janizary, fixed his flashing black eyes now on Napoleon, now on the prisoner. He seemed quivering with impatience for the order to cut the latter in pieces. Bertrand, impulsive and theatrical, gesticulated violently, calling heaven to witness his horror at the crime. The hussar Lacourbe's figure towered over his two fellow-officers. He maintained his air of haughty superiority which disguises the stupidity of the mere horseman. When Lacourbe was mounted, as Savary once said, the brains were in front of the saddle. Bertrand began again to deplore the recklessness with which the Emperor continually exposed himself.

"At Valladolid six months ago I saw him with my own eyes go down amongst a company of evil-looking monks and start a theological discussion upon the Inquisition. What was there to prevent one of those ruffians from plunging a dagger in his breast? The Pope would have beatified him." And to-day, this young German, he could bet, had been egged on by the priests, just like that Dominican who stabbed Hubert, the Emperor's valet, at Burgos. "The Emperor is brave as a lion; but he ought to think of us. On his single life how much depends!"

"Truly," said Mouton, with humorous sarcasm, "how much, how very much, as our creditors know!"

The young dragoon aide who had lost at cards groaned a deep assent. In every heart in that room now crouched the question—"What if the assassin's dagger had actually reached its mark? To me what would have been the consequences?"

Some looked to the future and the chances of a new régime, Jacobin or Constitutional; some remembered Moreau and mused fugitively on his designs for the restoration of the Bourbons; others thought of Talleyrand and his "legitimist" obsession. Some plotted a republic in which they themselves might play a political rôle; some again quite seriously thought of an elective empire, the ruler being chosen by the army. Davout or Bernadotte or even Murat might at once succeed Napoleon. Some again contemplated anxiously the risks to honours, titles, riches, lands which any change must involve. All, however, saw in Napoleon's death the certainty of a temporary peace, and for peace every man in that room was longing.

Napoleon, his brow laden with thought, was again walking slowly up and down. He was not unaware of the loyal or disloyal thoughts swarming behind those eyes that looked at him with so much affection or so much concern; he was old in the experience of men; the human heart had

little that was ugly to reveal to him now. Their fidelity to him, which was their honour, was the fidelity of brigands sworn to the same enterprise. He had never been the dupe of the hypocritical codes of compassion and fraternal love. The ethics of the tiger were the ethics of man.

Rapp, meanwhile, had placed himself nearer to the prisoner. His return to the language of his own boyhood, or something sympathetic in Staps' appearance, was working in him a curious change—pity, or at least understanding. The boy himself appeared to be once more unconscious of his surroundings. Now and then he tugged nervously at the cords fastening his hands. They had been knotted violently and awkwardly, and Rapp saw a bruise, ragged-edged and bleeding, on one of the wrists. His hands were finely made, but, like his face, sunburnt. Swift to feel sympathy or moved by some suspicion in his own mind, he now said to Rapp in confidential undertones and in German:

"Who is M. Corvisart?"

Rapp did not at once answer; then in an indifferent tone he said curtly:

"His Majesty's physician."

At once the prisoner's countenance was all excitement and he exclaimed protestingly:

"But I am not ill. What has a doctor to do here?"

He turned as in anger towards Napoleon, who, arrested by the question and Rapp's answer, had stopped in his walk, and stood eyeing Rapp and his prisoner. He seemed about to speak when the doors were again flung open and Corvisart entered.

IX

Though only fifty-five the famous physician looked a man of sixty. His quiet dress, decorated only with the

small red ribbon of the Legion of Honour, formed a contrast to the blaze of uniforms, just as the intellectuality of his features formed a contrast to the manly unintelligence which characterized most of the officers, making him, as it were, the sole companion to Bonaparte in that room. His naturally keen features were sharpened by suffering or weariness, and his eyes were tarnished.

Savary, wishing to oust Rapp, began to explain the incident to the physician, but Napoleon interrupted him at once:

"Corvisart, here is a patient for you. Examine him and tell me what you think of his state."

Uncertain whether it was a mystification, for he saw no signs of sickness, Corvisart hesitated.

"To work! To work!" the Emperor said with false gaiety, and, determined to prevent Savary or Rapp from impairing the impartiality of the physician's opinion, he came and stood near and pointed to Staps.

Corvisart looked at the prisoner in silence, then placed his fingers on his pulse. His own wrinkled hands, of a dirtyish red colour and covered on the back with sickly hair, made more marked the boy's smooth and delicately modelled wrist. Corvisart's sight was dim, but his touch was marvellous in its delicacy. His patient felt this and looked at the physician in trustful naïveté. He failed, however, to understand the questions which after a second or two Corvisart put to him in low, reassuring tones.

Receiving no answer, Corvisart once more felt the pulse, looked into the boy's eyes, which met his with an eager, almost childlike intensity, and, to the astonishment of every hearer, the prisoner suddenly said in bad French:

"Je ne suis pas malade, monsieur, pas vrai?"—translating the last words literally from the familiar German idiom "nicht wahr."—"I am not ill am I?"

In the strung state of the onlookers' nerves, had a deaf

mute suddenly spoken the effect could not have been more instantaneous.

Smiling, Corvisart was about to reply, but the Emperor by a gesture indicated that he was to speak to him, and to speak to him only.

"No, your Majesty, he does not seem to me ill. The pulse is irregular, wavering a little, but nervousness would explain that."

"You are certain? Be careful."

Impatient a little—for as he afterwards told Duroc, he imagined that he had to do only with a Viennese student who, in his eagerness to see the parade, had forced his way past a sentry or, as had happened before, had hidden in the grounds all night—Corvisart again examined Staps and again took his wrist.

"It is quite certain, sire; he is suffering from nothing except a slight shock to the nerves."

"Well, my good Corvisart, this youngster has just attempted to murder me. How do you explain that? Eh? Is that the mark of a sound brain?" And in malicious glee he took the physician by the ear.

Napoleon's reply may or may not have surprised Corvisart. His manner betrayed nothing. The steel-grey eyes remained steady, nor did he drop the assassin's wrist in horror. Corvisart, indeed, had long since come to see in all life a malady; and now, before Bonaparte's irritating insistence on Staps' madness, his mind in a tranced flash had darted across the mental phases of Napoleon's own career. To Corvisart, Napoleon, the greatest man on earth, was a sick man; and in the genius which convulsed a world he saw, point by point, the progress of two maladies, frightfully interlaced, epilepsy and cancer. The first had triumphed in Bonaparte's youth; in the melancholia of Valence, in the erotomania kindled by Josephine Beauharnais, who to Corvisart had, as to a confessor, revealed every secret of the

alcove, every secret of her "maniac lover" And now in mid-life canceroid tendencies were declaring themselves.

"Which is the true madman—the young assassin or the middle-aged world-tyrant, his victim?"

The problem roused all Corvisart's interest in the pathology of the human mind. During the recent campaign he had had opportunity enough of indulging that interest. To the prolonged rage of battle and its effects on the human mind had been added, during the hideous weeks in Lobau, the ravages of typhus. Hospital fevers were peculiarly malignant in type. The Danube was in flood. The war of the elements imitated the warfare of men. Thunderstorms alternated with periods of torrid heat or continuous rains. The cases of madness and cerebral affections were unusually numerous and violent. That of Pfeister, the Emperor's body-servant, had been the most painful. Distracted by over-excitement and the terrific cannonade of Wagram, he had, on the day of the battle, rushed shrieking into the woods, and was found four days afterwards a gibbering madman, gnawing the root of a tree whilst he crouched stark-naked in a grave which he had dug with his finger-nails. The contagion had spread. Fortunately the Spaniard, Esquirol, had at that very period abolished the savage custom of loading the mad with chains and pinioning them to an iron staple in their solitary dreadful cells. Corvisart had been one of the first, during the Wagram campaign, to adopt a humaner treatment.

That Napoleon himself had been affected by the tainted physical and the tainted moral atmosphere the physician had not a doubt. His silences, his transports of rage, his bursts of garrulous confidence, recalled the consular period and the soliloquies of Pont-au-Faix; whilst the recrudescence of his passion for Madame Walewska recalled only too faithfully the erotomaniac infatuation for the over-ripe charms of Josephine. And at this very moment, surveying

the Emperor furtively, Corvisart, to his anxiety, detected symptoms which were rarely misleading—the earthy complexion, the toneless gaze, and at intervals a faint yellowish foam at the corners of the mouth, which now began to twitch incessantly.

"Bigre—this is my real patient," he muttered to himself, seized again by the same presentiment as some seconds ago.

Napoleon, meanwhile, had resumed his fevered walk to and fro. He desired to prove on the spot that Staps was insane. This, he considered, was the only answer that he could make to Staps' accusations which, he imagined, had affected some of his suite, especially Rapp and the republican Hulin. Profoundly sceptical of man's wish for truth in any department of human activity, how was he to trust to the silent eloquence of fact or to the tardy justice of time to eradicate these accusations? Again, he desired to hide from his staff and if possible from Corvisart himself, the distinction of this from the former attempts at assassination or former plots, imaginary or real, which Fouché had from time to time unravelled or pretended to unravel. All these were tainted with personal ends. But here he was confronted by something new, something disconcerting, inexplicable.

"England, the cabinet of St. James, is not in this," he told himself in the interval of intense meditation. "This is German only."

And in that German youth there was something of the ancient world, something Greek, as he stood there, negligently scornful, it seemed, his head again drooping a little on one side, in fatigue not in shame, the eyes lowered and half-closed, yet fixed, musing on things beyond Bonaparte's range—or perhaps, he suddenly said to himself, meditating merely his frustrated attempt, or the resumption of it at some future time—or even now, now and here in this

room? Why not? Seizing with a leopard-bound some weapon, why should he not complete the design?

Napoleon had the heavy sickening sensation of a stab; he felt the dagger point dully searching the fibres about his heart, and ever the victim at least for a period of his own vivid fancies, he stepped back involuntarily—so deadly, yet so incomprehensible and portentous was the force of hate or scorn that now seemed to encircle or to emanate from the prisoner's vicinity.

But was Corvisart the man to aid him in declaring mad a sane man even in Austria?

He wheeled round and looked fixedly at the physician standing imperturbable, quietly observant, his head slightly bent in ironic courtier-fashion. For several seconds Napoleon did not speak, did not stir, but, a lion about to spring, stood studying the man whom, rightly or wrongly, he classed with Hulin as "an unperverted Jacobin." Then with a brief gesture pointing to the prisoner, he dropped rather than spoke the words:

"Take him away."

And at a sign from Savary, Friedrich Staps, accompanied by the two aides-de-camp, walked with a light step from the room, and, transferred to the gendarmes waiting outside he passed from Schönbrunn and from the general observation and knowledge of men for ever.

Napoleon being Napoleon, it was impossible for him not to observe that the Thuringian had neither looked round nor exhibited the slightest curiosity in his imperial person, as though, lifted above the grandeurs and distinctions of time, his thoughts were bent only upon the darkness or upon the light whither he was moving, and at how frightful a speed!

"He is young to die."

Berthier alone caught these words which Napoleon spoke carelessly, yet in momentary compunction. The boy's

simplicity and dignity, like that of a wounded duellist who knows he has to die but studies to bear himself greatly, had extorted his admiration. Intrepidity, indeed, was now almost the only quality which could excite admiration in Bonaparte. Every other admiration was dried up in him; but this boy had intrepidity.

X

As soon as the prisoner had been removed, Napoleon's suite, princes, dukes, marshals and generals, with a single *élan* crowded about the Emperor with words or cries of felicitation, each according to his temperament, his real or feigned enthusiasm. Napoleon's well-known willingness to receive petitions made the indignation, above all in soldiers, very sincere.

He quickly silenced their *empressement*, and turned to Corvisart.

"You are certain he knows what he is doing?"

Corvisart's face had assumed the morose aspect which it had worn throughout the campaign. Napoleon put it down to his jealousy of Larrey, made a baron after Lobau.

"Quite certain, your Majesty."

"Not a trace of mania—not even of religious mania?"

Corvisart's smile was like a sneer.

"Who can tell the bounds of madness? And religion, sire, is never far from madness, at least in a German. They are a nation of dreamers and idealists. Even their scientists here in Vienna talk as if the soul were a distinct entity —a guest in this inn, the body."

"Ah?"

Napoleon again looked at him scrutinisingly. He did not like the answer. It savoured of Jacobinism. And he did not like Corvisart's bearing.

Born of a Romanist family, and, like Duroc, a native of the Ardennes, Corvisart had lost his faith in the Revolution

without finding it possible to believe in the Empire; but from '93 he had kept at least one conviction, which time only strengthened in its bitterness—the conviction expressed by Fouché's inscription, carved in that year of the Terror upon every cemetery in France—"Death is an eternal sleep." Destined for the law in his youth, but passionate for science, above all for the writings of Buffon and Cuvier, he had by a bold device freed himself from its hateful drudgery, and hearing at Brussels some lectures on anatomy, had seen in that the path to the knowledge for which he thirsted. At the house of Barras he had met that other perpetual *malade*, Josephine de Beauharnais, and, consulted by her, he had become an *habitué* of her own and Barras' circle, and there in '95 had met the hungry, threadbare, taciturn, stiff-mannered, provincial artilleryman, Bonaparte. His attitude towards the Emperor had retained something of that first relationship.

Divining some intention in the Emperor's persistence and wishing also to disarm his suspicions, he now said: "But I have not seen much of the patient, your Majesty. I should like to examine him again. There may be a latent névropathie."

Napoleon's brow cleared. "Go, my good Corvisart, go. Talk with him in the guard-house, sit beside him, question him, win his confidence, speak to him of his home and of his childhood, of his friends. The wild writings of the Illuminati and the ideologues of Weimar and Berlin have perverted him."

He took Savary aside, spoke to him some rapid words, gave instructions. Taking Corvisart with him the duc de Rovigo then left the presence.

XI

Napoleon resumed his pacing of the floor. His false calm gradually disappeared. His features worked inces-

santly; his glances darted suspicion. He seemed ringed in by traitors. England was forgotten. He had before his imagination a more insidious peril.

This was the Tugendbund, the Bond of Valour, the League of Virtue, that singular secret society which was everywhere in Germany, but everywhere disappeared the instant it was approached. For nearly two years, by the aid of Davout's spies and Fouché's police, he had been observing its subterranean operations. Its invisible but omnipresent activity recalled the action of the Jacobins during the Terror. Its Board of Six sat at Königsberg, but it had its branches in every town and principality from the Oder to the Rhine and from the Baltic to the Styrian Alps. Its ostensible aim was the regeneration of the Fatherland. Its abettors, it was alleged, sought at once to restore religion and purify taste, and to fight against corruption in political as in social life; but its real design was to overthrow Napoleon. The King himself, Frederick William III., was said to be its Grand Master. The Queen of Prussia, the beautiful Louise, was its Armida, was suspected of inspiring its leaders by enticements similar to those by which Marie Antoinette seduced the leaders of the Revolution. Minister vom Stein, *le nommé Stein*, of Napoleon's dispatch from Madrid, was, it was rumoured, its Mirabeau; but every man prominent in German public life had encouraged or joined this infernal conspiracy—Hardenberg, Niebuhr, Scharnhorst, Goltz, Stadion, Blücher, Dalberg himself, the Primate, Napoleon's most servile flatterer. It had its agents in every university in Germany—Göttingen, Heidelberg, Jena, Marburg, Tübingen. How could it fail to extend its venomous influence to the great University of Vienna and its three thousand students? Another of its reputed agents, the celebrated August von Schlegel, the friend of Madame de Staël, had lectured to those very students less than a year ago.

"Fanaticism in the blood of youth works like a subtle flame," Napoleon reasoned, "prompting to heroism or to deadly error." The poet Collin and his brother—he had had his eye on them and their songs and their writings since February last. Translations of their stuff had been distributed in Paris itself. He had ordered their arrest the day of his arrival at Schönbrunn, but it was too late. The conspiracy had drawn other elements to itself—the discontent with the feudal tyrannies, was as violent in the Germany of Frederick William and Francis II. as in the France of Louis XVI. Schiller's *Robbers*, and even the melodramatic patriotism of Firbellin, the village-born youth loved by his mistress, condemned by her lord to be thrown alive into a smelting furnace, expressed phases of this social and political discontent.

But the peace—the terms of peace? What would be the effect of this attempted murder upon them?

He stopped his walk and stood.

"Send Nicas here."

The famous courier, whose midnight ride through the Wienerwald had extorted the admiration and the laughter of Vienna and the army, was in waiting. He entered at once, light, agile, with the look of an explorer or traveller, the finest figure except Favrol's in the room.

Nicas seemed to have expected the summons. Indeed, since eleven that morning, when Prince John of Liechtenstein and Count Bubna left Schönbrunn, he had been lounging about the palace with his instructions known and sealed, waiting for this order. For just as in war Napoleon always had plan behind plan lightly held within his brain, so in diplomacy he had scheme behind scheme ready to be sprung on his adversary at any unforeseen moment.

Napoleon took him to the end of the room, but almost instantly returned, and some seconds later Nicas, on a black powerful horse, the same as those upon which the

Chasseurs de la Garde were mounted but with better staying power, was on his road.

Those who saw him gallop through Vienna twenty minutes later saw that he left the city, not by the road that went to Brientz, but by a road which went to Altenburg. And with a thrill of excitement men asked—for his figure had become known in Vienna—"Has the peace been signed then, and is he the bearer of the news to Petersburg and to the Czar Alexander, or to Warsaw?"

Meanwhile, in the presence chamber, at a sign from Duroc, the Grand Chamberlain, several officers had retired. There now remained only a select group composed of Napoleon's great officials or most trusted generals.

Napoleon's aspect had not changed, unless that after dispatching Nicas his expression had lightened somewhat.

His eye fell on Berthier. "Ah, you rogue!" he exclaimed laughing. "What became of you and your Mameluke Guard? You made a run to the town? You have your plots with Maret?"

"But your Majesty—" Berthier expostulated.

He took hold of Berthier by the ear. The demonstration of affection seemed sincere. Tears stood in Berthier's eyes.

"Yes, yes, I know," Napoleon went on. "You are both alike; you must have your fingers in every pie. That devil of a Maret," he continued, his good humour flowing out like sunshine, "turned up at Soma Sierra on a November night, half frozen—'Sire! Sire!' He seemed to think it a crime that I had fired a shot when he was not there to see. Le bon Maret!" And he laughed again.

In this deliverance from a great danger a pleasant sense of well-being had at first diffused itself over him. But the mere mention of Spain was vitriol. The cloud returned to his brow, darker and more ominous than before.

"These hired assassins—it is not against me but against my brave grenadiers that they are sent. You saw their

wounds to-day. You heard their cries. But they shall at least have bread, my brave ones. I will rule Spain with a rod of iron. She has refused my good. She shall know my evil. I will turn her cities into garrisons. I will stall my horses in her monasteries, and her cathedrals I will make granaries for my armies."

And releasing the Prince de Neuchâtel's ear which till that moment he had been affectionately holding, he pushed him almost rudely aside. The real storm, which during Corvisart's presence had announced itself only by preliminary flashes now hurtled over the heads of the courtiers and soldiers.

"The ingratitude of men!" he suddenly burst out. "L'infamie humaine—that is the maxim which down the centuries each man has to learn, and to each it is surprising as death! What gratitude had Cæsar or the son of Philip? And I, whom can I trust?"

And turning sharply, and glancing alternately at Berthier, Duroc, Bertrand, Rapp and Hulin,—"Fidelity? Where is fidelity?" he exclaimed, unconsciously imitating Nero's cry as the sword of the pretorian entered his breast,—"I find egoism everywhere. What is this I hear of Soult? I hunted the English leopards to the sea. I go, and the English are back in Spain. And that is the moment which this fanfaron of a Soult chooses to make himself a king! When he ought to be on Wellington's traces he organises conspiracies in Oporto, talks like an avocat, sends me a committee requesting me to give Portugal a monarch—King Nicholas I.! For what dynasty but that of Soult can succeed the House of Braganza—eh? Le brave Soult! And whilst the courtiers are kissing the hands of King Nicholas, the English cannon send them skipping and I have lost Oporto."

He darted to a table on which a map of Germany was lying outspread. It was the same that he had used that

morning with Liechtenstein and Bubna. Flinging it on the floor Napoleon bent over another, a map of Spain.

"There, there," he cried, pointing to a spot, "there is Wellington, or there was Wellington three weeks ago: today for anything I know he may be sitting in Madrid. And what does Joseph do? How does the King my brother act? Wellington has not more than thirty thousand men and he is three hundred miles from Torres Vedras, his base; yet Joseph does nothing; he writes to me that he has only ten thousand troops. Ten thousand! Good God! Has then Wellington no communications? And why did he publish his numbers to the world? Am I a conqueror? Yet at Eckmühl I had only one against five; but in the orders of the day I declared that I was fifteen to ten, and my brave grenadiers fought as if it were a jest. Soldiers do not reason. They believe."

Hulin did a piece of mental arithmetic and suddenly looked at Rapp. Even at three hundred miles from his base Wellington must still have had twelve thousand to fifteen thousand men. A sarcastic light had risen in his eyes. He had been through the Italian campaign with Bonaparte. This was not the spirit in which Bonaparte at that period, at Arcola or at Rivoli, addressed his troops. Was Napoleon's brain becoming dulled, Hulin asked himself, or was he simply talking for effect, unscrupulous in argument, haranguing the imaginary Joseph?

Napoleon pushed aside the map and, his hands behind his back, began to walk up and down.

XII

All were congratulating themselves that the storm was over and Duroc was about to remind the Emperor that he had eaten nothing since breakfast, when on a sudden the thunder gathered again, and this time it burst over Ber-

thier, who, with his arms folded, stood in perfect unconsciousness that this attitude, good enough in Napoleon's absence, was ridiculous and supremely irritating in Napoleon's presence. It prevented the Emperor taking that attitude himself.

But with a curious cunning or malignity he did not at once attack Berthier directly.

"Ingratitude and imbecility are my world." And as though appealing to the Prince de Neuchâtel for support he looked at him searchingly. "Nature should have given me a hundred heads as she gave Briareus a hundred hands. I loved Marmont as a son. Yet you know, you know his fatuities at Laa—there where a single squadron of Radetsky's hussars might have destroyed the bridge and made my victory and the death of twenty thousand men in vain. And in Passau and in Antwerp, in Madrid and in Rome—why am I not there myself? Why am I still in Vienna? Why am I not with my armies in Spain? It is *you*, Berthier, you who are to blame."

Berthier unclasped his arms and stepped back, staring at his master. The latter poured on the astonished Prince de Neuchâtel a torrent of picturesque invective, now a single epithet, now an unforgettable laughter-provoking phrase, caricaturing, ridiculing in every possible manner Berthier's disposition of the army in April last, scattered over an area of sixty miles.

"Dîtes, dîtes! If the Archduke had stood in your council of war as your most trusted adviser, what other dispositions would you have taken? You could have been annihilated; you *ought* to have been annihilated."

And as though he intended himself to supplement the Archduke's neglected duty and annihilate Berthier now, he advanced upon him; but suddenly checked himself with a gesture of mingled grief and discouragement.

Berthier, "the heaven-born chief of the Staff," the con-

stant lover of Madam d'Esté, a passion perplexing to his master as to himself, was a man who in service found his greatness as others in command; in his youth the follower of Lafayette and freedom's daybreak in the West, the hero of Lodi, extravagant, indefatigable, squandering a million a year.

Napoleon resumed.

"I came to Donauwörth. I had to fight five battles in five days. I stormed Ratisbon. I had to lead my armies to Vienna against a massed enemy, three hundred thousand of them, and I had to do this as rapidly as a man travels in a time of peace, fighting eleven battles and thirty-seven combats. Do you suppose that is good for a nation or for an army? And, but for you, it might all have been avoided."

If this were acting, General Hulin thought indignantly, it was greater than Talma's. If Napoleon actually knew, if at that moment he was actually conscious that Berthier's dispositions were due to Napoleon's own mistake or to the failure of a semaphore message, how could he or any man speak in those tones?

Another brusque change in Napoleon's ideas stopped Hulin's morose speculations.

"But I should do everything myself, everything. In Paris, my capital, nothing is right. Cambacérès does nothing; Clarke does nothing. My minister for war allows the English to believe that I have only fifteen thousand men to spare and if they care to land at Flushing the road to Paris is open. My ministers! By the God of battles, they will lie in bed and snore till the English wake them! And Fouché—what does that traitor mean?"

He looked round for Savary—forgetting for the moment that the duc de Rovigo had left the room with Corvisart. Duroc explained. The explanation appeared to bring Napoleon's thoughts back to the incident of the morning. But now he took it up from yet another standpoint.

"He stuffs his imagination with Roman histories, that young hothead. But in Paris itself books appear every week, newspapers appear every morning—and of what are they full? The History of La Vendée, Suetonius and Tacitus, and the falsified, distorted lives of the Roman Cæsars—is that the reading that Fouché thinks most suitable for the great French nation, the successor of Rome? It is to place daggers in the hands of my subjects. *I* become Tiberius, Nero, Domitian—que scais-je? If this is done in Paris what wonder that I find a Brutus at Schönbrunn!"

Berthier, though no ally of Fouché, made a conciliatory, half-protesting gesture and glanced insinuatingly at Duroc. Both dreaded the duc d'Otranto. Was not the Emperor exaggerating?

"Do you wish proofs?" Napoleon burst out furiously. "Tiens, I will give you proofs."

He sketched with amazing accuracy and rapidity the books which had appeared during the campaign, especially the writings of Beauchamp, a former *agent de police*, who, simulating the desire to return to Napoleon's service, had taken to the writing of "history," and into a brochure upon La Vendée had woven an appeal for a rising against Napoleon, the gaoler of the Pope, similar to the rising of La Rochejaquelin against Robespierre. Again, in Rapin's treatise on Roman Law Savary's secret police had discovered this sentence, and used it against Fouché's secret police—"Thus Tiberius, till now a friend of the Senate and of the Republic, when once he had embrued his hands in the blood of the high-born Germanicus, turned to tyranny and waded deeper and deeper in blood." To an unprejudiced eye there was nothing in this that could offend the most susceptible of tyrants, but Savary, tormented himself, it was said, by the injured phantom of d'Enghien, had pointed out to Napoleon how easy it was to interpret the

paragraph and the succeeding chapter as a deadly satire upon his own history since March, 1804.

"Am I Tiberius?" he exclaimed, this time appealing to Duroc as though to destroy the effect of Berthier's remonstrance. "Is this Capri? But Fouché is conspiracy incarnate. And Murat—that popinjay, *ce geai de Murat*—is still his tool. 'No conspiracy without a sword' is axiomatic, and in the conspiracy against me the King of Naples is that sword. Murat? *He* would sit upon my throne—mine—that plumaged cock who thinks he has the pinions of an eagle! And now, if Murat fails, Bernadotte will serve. Bernadotte! The blasé old ruffian who nearly lost me Jena. And why was he not at Eylau? And why was he late for Austerlitz? Every grenadier in the army knows why we had to wait three days in the terrible December weather, with neither food nor brandy, and then arise and defeat two Emperors and the armies of two Empires. And now, that is the man who issues his proclamations without my permission and demands money—money—money, but will do nothing to earn it. Does no blasted tree grow by the Scheldt to which this Judas might hang himself? But it is the same with Masséna, the same with Ney, with Junot, with Augereau, with Suchet, with Murat."

And he enumerated the sums disbursed annually to these marshals. Berthier alone had two millions a year; Davout 900,000; Masséna 1,200,000; Marmont 700,000. Certainly there seemed a reason for Bernadotte's exclamation long afterwards: "Once I was a marshal of France. Now I am merely King of Sweden."

"Gold, gold! I would need a Golconda, and have but a Spain. The ingratitude and rapacity of men! Was Genghis or Timour surrounded by such vultures? Spain costs me millions and yields me nothing. I have spent seven hundred and ninety millions this year, and in 1808 I spent seven hundred and sixty-five millions. How much

did I get from Spain? Not a sou, and it absorbs some of my bravest troops. I should be there amongst them—I should be there amongst them. . . ."

Anger now fled from his voice; it was full of nothing but self-reproach.

Berthier chose this moment to let fall the question which for several minutes had been in his head:

"Where should your Majesty *not* be?"

And Napoleon, as if conscious that he had exceeded the measure in his rebukes, ignored the flattery and once more spoke in a tone of bitter self-exculpation.

"If I were what my enemies and the English say, do you think my soldiers would not know it? They see me every hour of every day. Or do you suppose that they fought as they have fought these twelve heroic years from Arcola to Ratisbon and Wagram for three pence a day? No, it is because I speak to their souls, to something in them profound, mysterious. They accuse me of being a slave to my ambition. Ambition? I and my ambition are one. How can I be its slave unless I am slave to myself? Do they imagine that I am a Romanoff? Do they think that I would commit murder for a crown? And a throne! What is a throne? The throne of Clovis was the stump of an oak. And the sceptre of the first of the Capets was, like the sceptre of Agamemnon, cut from the nearest hedge. A throne! On the day of my coronation I had no rest until I had torn my robe to tatters and kicked them about the floor. Duroc is my witness. I could neither think nor act in the gew-gaws. I could not even feel myself a man."

And in a voice like that of a man in a trance, Napoleon uttered the singular words:

"If I could but have ten more years—or even five. With peace in Europe I could do much in five years. Paris, Europe, Asia, and then— But too much is against me. I have come too late. The fire is extinct."

But caught again into the vortex of self-exculpatory denunciation, he hurried on:

"It is the kings that are to blame. The kings have vowed my ruin. They will not give peace to Europe. To cover their own crimes they accuse me of crime. Assassins, they declare that I am an assassin. The Czar accused me of the murder of d'Enghien and put his court in mourning. Where was his virtue, his indignation and his abhorrence of foul play when the cut-throats sent by Pitt were lurking round Petersburg ready to strangle his father, my friend and ally, Paul I.? And Gustavus IV.? He too calls me assassin. But he is fallen, and I do not make war upon the fallen. And these Prussians, dreamers and crétins—they make an idol of the Mecklenburg-Strelitz princess—that infamous House—Frederick William's Queen, Louisa. They lie and lie about my interview with her. She is thirty-five and already *passée* and Frederick William is a year older than I am. They had come to years of discretion at Austerlitz, both of them. Where then was the great-souled Queen Louisa? Where were the Prussian Hector and Andromaque when, on the morning after the battle, I made Haugwitz demand that Prussia should seize Hanover?"

His laugh was terrible—the laugh of the Hebrew; but his brow remained black, and he walked up and down absorbed in still blacker reflections.

"You appeal to laws?" he said flashing round and addressing an imaginary throng of adversaries. "What do I care for your laws, human or divine so called? Laws, human or divine, are temporary contracts between temporary and changing aggregations of men. The ancients made the gods themselves bend before Destiny. And my politics is Destiny. The laws that I obey spring from within me. My will, withdrawn and apart, unites in the dreadful solitudes with the inmost will of the worlds and then I act—and I then am Destiny."

He resumed the attack on the court of Berlin.

"His Majesty of Prussia at my bidding picked Hanover out of England's pocket when England's back was turned, and your Queen Louisa, your Andromaque, flung her white arms round the pickpocket Hector's neck—your tearful heroine, beautiful in her disaster, heroic, unyielding, constant! And elated by the heroic success she gave a dance on that very *jour de l'an;* she was insolent to my ambassador. The two criminals, with Hanover safely pocketed, dreamed that Prussia single-handed could now meet the victor of Austerlitz. Jena taught them a lesson—Jena. But only for a time. The wise remember Destiny's chastisements; the fool quickly forgets all save his folly, and Prussia is that fool. She is my ally; yet a Hohenlohe fought against me at Eckmühl and galloped back to Berlin like a jackal to its lair. So are they all, all your hereditary kings and princes, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Romanoff, your English Guelph and Spanish Bourbon! Europe is one huge Augean stable. And Prussia? Prussia is the foulest corner of it all. But they shall know, they shall know what it is to arm against me the fanatic's dagger."

A tracery of ideas swept across Napoleon's face. He was sick of the word "Revolution"; for his would-be assassin of that morning was a Revolutionist; and he could not now speak of his dynasty without betraying a secret that he wished to maintain until at least he had returned to Paris. Yet something he must say; for he was wrought to the height, and with a curious blending of craft, prudence, and extreme audacity, feeling a joy in thus expressing his contempt for men by uttering truths perhaps profound, but to those who heard him unintelligible, or, if intelligible, certain to be regarded with furious opposition. Danger Bonaparte had rarely shunned; and this was danger. And now crushing in his hands his old hat, already soft and

kneaded, though provided every three months with a new white silk lining, he stopped, and with that oratory which at these moments, aided by the real mystery and power of his personality, always electrified:

"Do you know what it is against which I war? It is against Patriotism; it is against Nationality. Patriotism is the eating ulcer of humanity. War alone can cauterize the sore. Like range behind range of mountains I see new wars arise; mine are only the prelude."

Hulin lifted his head. Standing with both his hands lightly poised on the gilt edges of a richly carved table he looked at his master.

"A federated Europe with France at its head? There is a thought here," Hulin said to himself and waited.

But Bonaparte permitting a storm of ideas to pass unspoken, Hulin saw suddenly the Emperor's face flush, his eyes lightened, the sound which his hands made twisting and untwisting his hat, soft as it was, could almost be heard in the silence. His right leg was trembling convulsively.

Duroc, fearing another epileptic attack like that in August which had brought Corvisart flying to Schönbrunn, crept nearer him, but stopped at the Emperor's next words.

"But you do not understand. Not one of you understands. What? Is there one of you who would not have been glad in his very soul had that dagger sunk to the hilt in my breast? Is there one of you? There was a Ganelon in the army of Charlemagne. Why should not Schönbrunn have been my Roncesvalles? To-night perhaps it may be; these walls are full of daggers."

His face at this moment had the look of a death-mask, the earthy pallor, the tintless vitreous gaze, the lashless eyelids, the forehead without eyebrows, as if thought and life together had receded into some inaccessible heights or

remotenesses from which he surveyed the whole course and end of human life and history.

"That venomous boy, hired by Austria or hired by Prussia, or by the Jesuits at the bidding of Cardinal Pacca —what do I know? Perhaps in collusion with my own followers, my own ministers—for it needs but this—that one of you should betray me. Austria? But they shall not succeed. They splinter their daggers on adamant. You give me counsels unasked, you din my ears with your snoring banalities—moderation, peace with England, to come to terms with Liechtenstein, the inconveniences of the Continental System. Is it that I do not know them, these inconveniences—I?"

He sought for words. His eyes darted ineffectual lightnings about the room. The words came.

"*You* warn me? You? You would dictate my duties, thrust yourself between my goal and me? You would frustrate my designs, moderate my course, even *guide* my path—mine! You, you would prescribe a path to the avalanche?" he exclaimed, grasping at the metaphor which had occurred to him on his ride. "You deform, be-monster yourselves by your folly, not me."

Suddenly he rushed at Berthier and seizing the lapel of his heavily embroidered coat he dragged him to the window which looked out across the garden and fountains, the statues and parterres, bathed now in the last light of the October afternoon, and, pointing to the sky, Napoleon exclaimed:

"Do you see that star? Do you see it?" he repeated in a voice that sent a shudder to the heart.

Berthier, thinking that his master was mad at last, or that he was the victim of a cataleptic attack similar to that of August, stammered some vague words—his sight was not so keen as his Majesty's; stars, by ordinary men, could be seen at mid-day only from the bottom of a pit.

"You do not see it? Yet you counsel me; would control my course? I see it, moi. And that star is the ruler of my fate. It is the star of my destiny—guiding me on, on, on!"

Trembling violently, he released Berthier, and struggled against the emotion convulsing him; then, furious at his own loss of self-command, he stuttered fiercely the word: "Sortez."

He sank back, shuddering and shuddering again. His features, sickening pale, were convulsed. The faint dirtyish foam gathered more thickly about his lips.

At a commanding sign from Duroc the room was cleared. He and Berthier remained alone with the Emperor.

CHAPTER V

THE MIND OF A CITY

I

IN Vienna that afternoon the ferment provoked by the conflicting rumours was extreme. War was judged to be inevitable. The Bourse within half an hour registered a fall of three per cent. The shops in the main thoroughfares, in the Graben and Kärnthnerstrasse, closed as usual for the mid-day meal, had not re-opened. Thousands of citizens paraded the streets or stood in excited groups, especially in the Alleegasse and its vicinity, awaiting the arrival of Berthier, Prince de Neuchâtel. Hundreds thronged to the Cathedral or to the great churches of St. Michael and St. Dominic to pray. For what?

Towards evening the cafés, restaurants, bierhallen, were packed. At the Café Chénier, recently opened in the Kohlmarkt and frequented by the middle class, the crowd outside became so large and so menacing that it was twice dispersed by the gendarmerie. Their new uniforms, an invention of Napoleon's satellite, exposed them to the jeers and hoots or to the witticisms of the mob.

Inside the café a babel of guttural voices drowned the tzigane orchestra.

"I saw the blood on his vest. With my own eyes I saw the blood!" a Greek "banker," really a money-lender, asseverated, waving his plump brown hand covered with

rings. "I was standing beside the Prince de Ponte Corvo, who is my very good friend. Napoleon threw up his arms, then dropped them, so, so, so"—imitating the gesture—"closed his eyes, staggered and was about to fall when the Prince de Ponte Corvo——"

But a ponderous, hulking figure, a Viennese silk-merchant, interrupted the speaker. "The Prince de Ponte Corvo, did you say?" he began with slow emphasis. "Nonsense! Bernadotte is in Belgium. I read it in the *Gazette* yesterday." And he muttered contemptuously, "These usurers are all alike, liars or coiners to a man."

The dispute became bitter. Several of the Viennese took the side of their fellow-citizen against the hated Greek; others, who had borrowed or hoped to borrow from the latter, asserted that they too had recognized Bernadotte; some had seen him that morning, others had passed him yesterday riding in the Prater.

But a new-comer who had forced his way through the cordon gave a new trend to their ideas. He was a great timber-merchant and the barges of his fleet were known on every jetty of the Danube from Rustchuk to Ratisbon. "Napoleon?" he began mysteriously, rolling out the name. "No mortal hand struck him down. His time is up. Ten years; ten years of power and glory; gold and women and palaces and gardens. He's got 'em all. The demon has kept his bond. But what of that? The time is up. What hasn't happened to-day will happen to-morrow. Ten years ago to-morrow, Saturday, 14th October, 1799, General Buonaparté came back from Egypt. He landed at Fréjus. Why was he not shot for deserting his army? For the same reason that he was not guillotined when, a few weeks later, he conspired against the Republic. For the same reason that he was defeated at Marengo, yet victorious. It is Hell's doing. It is his compact with Hell. Until this time to-morrow, 14th October, he is invulnerable. But after to-morrow——"

This account, which explained everything, made a deep impression and a man who had not yet spoken now asked:

"Can any one inform me whether that story of Madame Walewska having borne the Corsican blackguard a son in the apartments sacred to our blessed empress Maria Theresa, is true or false?"

He was a thick-set, combative individual, and though a Styrian he had Magyar blood. He too was a merchant, but traded with the Ionian islands—trafficking in the sulphur and marbles of Corfu, in the currant vines of Zante, and for the last two years in the spices of Cephalonia.

"That can I," the barge-owner retorted. "It was no son, but a monster born the evening of the demon's apparition. It is whispered that she too had abandoned her body to the embraces of the demon. His son, not Bonaparte's. Bonaparte can't have a son."

All except the Greek crossed themselves, some phlegmatically, some with looks of horror.

"Has the Tempter still those tastes then?"

The other nodded significantly.

An old fellow with a long thick dirtyish white beard said in a greasy voice:—"It fulfils the scriptures. It fulfils the prophecy which was on every lip on his birthday fêtes—'The black eagle shall raven no longer, struck down within Wien's walls.'"

The prophecy was not in the Old Testament; but it was the most famous of the anagrams formed by blending Napoleon's full name with the motto of the city itself, and the whole serious company became absorbed in the discussion of omens and portents, prophecies and comparisons of Napoleon and Suleiman, and the siege of Vienna by the Turks with the sieges of Vienna by the French.

"You speak of the 14th October. Let me tell you about the 15th, the day after to-morrow, when Suleiman the Magnificent was forced to raise the siege of Vienna." Who

could tell what deep plans were not in the Archduke Charles's head, or in that of the Archduke Johann there behind the Russbach?

And with a simultaneous impulse of bourgeois loyalty, they rose heavily to their feet and shouted gutturally—"Es lebe der Herzog Karl; es lebe der Kaiser; es lebe der Herzog Johann! Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!"

II

In the Villars café, on the other hand, situated in the Stephanplatz, a very different state of feeling prevailed. The Café Villars was the rendezvous of fashion, and though not by any means crowded this afternoon, for the majority of its habitués were with the army or with the Emperor, it still presented a scene of great animation. A fine orchestra was playing. The guests were talking in low tones and drinking coffee or sherbets or wine. Here the attack on Napoleon was pooh-poohed. It was even insinuated that it was a got-up affair, designed as an excuse for breaking off negotiations or more subtly to dissemble, by the appearance of his personal danger, his real weakness and an intended concession to Austria.

"Nothing is too diabolically subtle for Bonaparte," a brother of Lan-Lan's observed; "but the affair does not strike me as a fake. Bonaparte rode away. If it had been a fake he would have become histrionic and talked Plutarch. It was Savary who arrested the assassin. I saw him taken to the guard-house. I thought he had been stealing."

Lan-Lan's brother had a face less oval than his sister's, but he had her soft voice and half-humorous dogmatism of manner; he had her long eyelashes, and their upward curl was very visible as he blinked before a broad shaft of sunlight that suddenly flooded through an open door across the

room, lighting up with phantasmagoric distinctness the inlaid patterns on chairs and tables, glasses, bottles, the faces of the Austrians seated around them.

The report that Staps was a Viennese student was dismissed with the sententious comment, "Vienna might breed a Cæsar or a Sulla, but a Brutus never."

Here also the conversation settled upon the probable effect of this real or imaginary conspiracy upon the prospects of peace. Would the Archduke be reconciled to his brother, Stadion replace Metternich, and the war be recommenced? Such a war, it was admitted, could only end in the fall of Bonaparte or in the erasure of Austria from the map of Europe. One man, a councillor of Mines, stated his opinion categorically.

"Begin the war again? And why? To please England? To please Prussia? How long is Austria to act the gladiator? It is all very well for the Archduke Charles to cry, 'The freedom of Europe has taken refuge under our banners.' The freedom of Europe! Freedom is a dangerous word and should be left to the Jacobins. What is 'Europe'? A name. Five bloody battles in one year. Austria has done her part."

"Besides," said another, placing his epigram once more, "the Archduke is played out. He began as a second Eugène; he ends as a second Mack."

So in the cafés men talked and conjectured, and in private houses, where they sat watching the hands of the ladies at their enfilage or mizzling—the picking apart of gold brocade—the same conjecture, varied a little, went on.

Towards the dinner hour, which in Vienna at that period was about six o'clock, an approximation to the truth became known; and in hundreds of families that evening, in the city and in the suburbs, one mysterious word passed from lip to lip.

"The Tugendbund? It is a reality then?"

III

That same evening the Opera House in the Kärnthnerstrasse was crowded. Members of the nobility and of the leading families of Vienna had begun to slip back to the city and now occupied their boxes or sat incognito in the stalls, entered under various false names on the Governor's, Count Andréossy's register. The attachés of the Russian ambassador, Czartorysky, and the prominent members of the Russian colony, the Ostrakovs, the Gradins, the Petrowskis, refusing to submit any longer to the boredom of Pressburg or the filth of Buda Pesth, were there almost to a man, relying on the friendship of their master with Napoleon. Many of the boxes and almost all the fauteuils were occupied by French officers quartered in the houses of the owners. French officers also mixed with the Viennese in the huge and dimly lighted parterre.

The piece was *Cosi fan tutti;* but only a few virtuosi, or partisans of the new school, listened. Mozart's music, even this, the gayest of his operas, the least tinged with "Mozartian melancholy," was to French and to Italian ears in 1809 heavy, slow and uninspired, and in some portions barbarous and absurd, as the E flat Symphony or the Finale to *Don Giovanni.* Great music, these critics declared, had come to an end with Cimarosa. Pergolese and he had found no successors, and, except Mayer and Baer, Germans in blood but Italians in manner, not even an effective imitator.

But to-night the question occupying every mind was still the probable effects of the sensational incident of that morning upon the peace negotiations.

In a box on the right-hand side of the stage, on the same side as the Imperial box but a tier higher, sat the old Count Esterthal and two French aides-de-camp, one of whom was Favrol, the other Colonel Legros, a cavalry officer of the

swashbuckler type. He was aide-de-camp to Oudinot, successor of Lannes in the command of the Second Corps.

It was now the end of the first act. The wish to talk instead of listening had become universal, alike in the parterre, in the stalls, and in the boxes. The stage manager had repeatedly appeared and been as repeatedly sent back amid impatient or angry shouts of "Attendez! Attendez!"

In the Esterthal box the conversation, studiedly avoiding politics, had turned upon music and the drama. Favrol admired Haydn and was an enthusiast for Mozart. He had had, he once told Amalie laughingly, but three passions in his life, Mozart, Cimarosa, and Shakespeare. And in herself, though he had never had the courage to tell her this, he had discovered something of each of his passions—the reckless joy and rich laughter of Cimarosa, Mozart's ethereal melancholy, and the foreshadowings of that energy and passion, the desire for which had driven him from the vapid literature of his time to study day and night the Italy of the Renaissance and the tragedies of Ford and Webster, Tourneur, Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The old Count, on the other hand, detested everything modern, the new German poetry and the new German music. He called Schiller "a Jacobin," and Goethe "an enemy of religion," and Werner "a maniac." But he liked the military plays of Ayrenhof, which Favrol styled "headquarters timber," and he praised the simple and homely pathos of the Suabian, Konrad Grübel. Rentzdorf's art the Count simply refused to discuss.

"We Germans," the old aristocrat declared, after the momentary silence caused by Rentzdorf's name, "read too much, write too much, think too much. What is this chatter about the Aufklärung and these philosophies of enlightenment? Sensible men despise such mountebankism. We have had enough of Josephinism. The doctrine of equality

would require society to begin at the beginning with each new generation. Men are not equal. That doctrine cost us the Netherlands: it cost us Italy. Now we are about to lose Illyria. And why?"

Favrol had a singular sensation. He ceased to be a soldier sitting by right of conquest in a captured city. He was merely the son of a small landed proprietor of Languedoc talking to a member of the oldest and haughtiest, if stupidest and most bigoted caste in Europe. Yet he had neither the power to answer nor the will to laugh, so actual and so unbridgeable was the gulf separating him from this man and from his convictions. And what if Count Esterthal's convictions were an anticipation of that "judgment of posterity" upon the French Revolution to which each faction whether in triumph or beside the guillotine, had successively appealed?

"But Colonel Legros cannot see the parterre," Count Esterthal said.

With a courtesy full of irony he forced the aide to come forward whilst he stepped back himself, leaving the two French officers to study the house.

The scene they looked on had in its distinction and variety no equal in Europe; for here were grace, rank, richness of costume, famous names, reputations military and civil; and here too every effect that woman's seduction can impart to variousness of origin, temper, pose, or attitude. To Favrol its seduction to-night was extreme; but poignant too was the impression of its transitoriness; for this that moved there so full of life was to him in his present mood unsubstantial as a picture cast by the rising sun upon a mist above a cataract, to-morrow to be replaced by another, and yet another, eternally, cycle beyond cycle; and out there in other worlds, myriads of them crawling blindly round myriads of suns, in their mad flame dance the same unmeaning drama—youth, passion, glory, age, and the grave—

monotonous as the season's alternations, monotonous as day and night, monotonous as all things, as all things.

Nevertheless, for a second or two, the sheer sensuous appeal lifted his spirit to that region which the mediævalists name "the heaven of pure joy"—verum gaudium coeleste. An unseen, mystic trumpet-call, the triumph of the existent, the spirit of vital joy, laughed there, murderous, inexorable, whispering in those voices, pulsating in those white forms—as once it had pulsated, murderous, inexorable, in the rangers of the forests and the night, the tiger and the puma.

"The beginning and the end, alpha and omega," Favrol said, turning away.

The glistening black eyes, vigorous moustache, olive skin warmed by the sun, and red mouth of Legros confronted him.

"What's that old poll parrot been talking about?" the aide-de-camp asked Favrol in a husky whisper.

"Art."

"Art! Holy Moses! What I want is a woman, a real live girl. I'd rather talk about these Viennese high-flyers—where's the old poll's daughter? What did she leave the box for? Hell and lightnings, did you see her look when I squeezed her arm? But I'll bring her down a peg. I'll teach her to respect an officer of la Gr-r-rande Armée! What's the matter?"

"Nothing," Favrol answered indifferently, "but you'd better not forget what happened to Gavroche."

Gavroche three weeks ago had been sentenced to death by Napoleon for offering an insult to the Princess Esterhazy within the precincts of Schönbrunn itself, and had only been respited on the urgent intercession of the entire staff.

"Oh, I didn't mean *that*," and twirling his moustaches to vertical points he said with an air of tipsy gravity, "Charles-Aristide Legros is too much a man of honour to squeeze a woman against her will a second time. All I meant was——"

Favrol looked down at the stalls. In the crowd which was increasing amongst the fauteuils he suddenly saw the Countess Amalie. She was in white; and to his eyes her dress, from the ostrich plumes above her hair down to the white silk shoes, became a shimmering cloud. No other woman in that room was quite like her—the brow, the fine nostrils, the poise of the classic head, the symmetries of the figure, shoulders, waist, and hips. Beauty streamed from that woman, environing her with a raiment of sorcery; yes, of her that word could be spoken.

A deep melancholy invaded Favrol; an aria of Pergolese sang in his ears like a refrain from an irrevocable past,

"Si cerca, si dice,
"L'amico dov'è?"

"L'amico infelice,
"Respondi, morì."

Favrol had never told himself that he was in love with Amalie von Esterthal; but in her society he experienced a sentiment for which he had to coin the phrase "serene splendour." In their talks he had again and again met with unexpected utterances which, he judged could only have arisen in a mind habituated to unusual thought, and with a capacity for suffering or bliss beyond that of most women. Leaving the Palazzo one afternoon in September he had, as he sauntered along the ramparts, compared the conversation, because of its subtleties, to the talk of two mathematicians upon the motion of a wave and its equations. But instead of a profound study of curves and lines, her talk had seemed to him to imply the profoundest study of human emotions and ideas.

"Yes, I must get away from Vienna; the sooner the better."

In Vienna he always felt beneath himself. Its caste system froze. Artists, composers, poets, unless they were men of birth, were in Vienna treated like valets. Mozart had been kicked out of doors, nor had he seemed to resent

the outrage. Yet what hideous scarecrows many of the women were, and what crétins the men! Francis II. himself went slinking about like a frightened hound.

Legros meanwhile looked at the scene, his shining black eyes glancing from woman to woman, finding each face, each contour desirable or indifferent.

"By God," he said to Favrol, pointing to the semi-transparent costumes that like soft-hued flowers showed themselves everywhere about the theatre, outlining women's forms, "when a young man in Vienna marries he knows at least what he is marrying, and on his wedding night he can have little either to learn or fear—eh? Look there! Look at those two! I've got as much on when I go slap into my bath. Mon Dieu, Vienna's the place to study the perfections of the feminine figure!"

The old Count had risen abruptly, and placing his box at the command of his two enforced guests, he excused himself. There was a marked touch of haughtiness in his courtesy.

IV

Downstairs Count Esterthal forced his way through the crowd with some difficulty, ignoring the outstretched hand of friends and acquaintances. The one subject upon which they wished to speak with him, was the one subject which he wished that night to avoid. He reached the front row of the stalls. Amalie smiled to him from a distance and raised her fan; but arrested by the dense crowd the Count shook his head in amused perplexity. He stopped to take breath beside a faded crimson curtain looped back by a cord and a heavy gold tassel, underneath the first tier of boxes.

The stalls here were chiefly occupied by French officers, strangers to Esterthal. Other officers from various parts of the theatre had joined them. All were talking and gesticu-

lating. Further back, in the fourth and fifth rows, servants in livery with numbers affixed to their hats were handing round ices and sherbets.

The Count turned from these to the group of which Amalie and Toc were the centre. In one of them he recognized Count Markowitz, Johann's elder brother; beside him stood an official in the War Department. He too, like Markowitz, was a dilettante and "patron of religion, morality, and the arts." Kaas, the Dresden landscape painter, stood a little behind, stroking his long fine beard. Amalie herself was talking to a tall, erect, white-haired old man, with a distinguished bearing but insignificant features. He wore the dress of an abbé. But another member of the group, talking to the Princess Dürrenstein, made upon Count Esterthal, fatigued as he was, an instantaneous and extraordinary impression. This was a man of middle height powerfully built, slightly aggressive in his bearing. His face, dull red in complexion, was marked by smallpox; but a countenance more commanding in its genius, a head more lion-like in its tranquil power, its masses of black hair growing low on the forehead which they seemed to grip like a helmet, Count Esterthal had never seen; and for one singular moment he experienced the exact sensation which he had experienced that morning in looking at Bonaparte from about the same distance. Mistrusting his own sensation, Esterthal looked at Toc and then at the face of the man she was addressing. His eyes were half-closed; but there was at once suspicion and the most haunting pathos in the glances which, when Toc ceased speaking and there was a silence, these eyes cast upon the faces around; nor could anything exceed the locked energy of the mouth, the conflict of extreme suffering and extreme will.

"I must be getting old, old and fanciful, like Würmser at Mantua," he said to himself irritatedly, and with an impatient step he advanced towards the group.

There he exchanged a few words with Count Markowitz; then taking Amalie's arm he drew her aside. Before he had spoken a word she had divined his wish.

"You are tired? I too am tired a little. Let us go home," she said hurriedly.

Uncertain of her real wishes he did not at once answer. He had divined the unrest in her mood all day, and to-night at the Opera under her tranquil reserve that unrest, he had easily perceived, had become a fever.

"You have heard nothing?" she said carelessly.

"Of the negotiations? Nothing."

She turned, hiding her pallor and under her lowered eyelids her eyes, discouraged, half-desperate, seemed to probe every corner of the Opera.

The Count to gain time looked at the group from which he had just taken her, above all at the thick-set figure of the stranger. The latter now stood not fifteen feet away, so that his features were clearly visible,—the deep dent in the chin, the changing grey and blue of his eyes, deep-set and under thick, dusky brows. His voice, though he softened his sibilants like a Rheinlander when he answered the tall, white-haired personage, in whom Esterthal now recognized the famous organist and composer, Abt Vogler, was abrupt and aggressive as his bearing.

"What, you here, Beethoven?"

Beethoven? The name suggested nothing to Count Esterthal.

Piqued at his ignorance of so notable a personality in Vienna, the Count was about to enquire the name of this man, when Amalie, drawn by the wild hope that Rentzdorf might be waiting for her at the Palazzo, said again,——

"Shall we go home, padrino? Do you mind? You will see Count Markowitz later. I have asked Charlotte and him to supper. Toc too is coming. They are all going to the Rittersaal. Prince W. . . ."

A shout interrupted her. The stage-manager had once more appeared in front of the curtain, but once more his excuses and appeals were silenced by the angry and derisive hootings. Amid the hubbub in French, German, and Italian Count Esterthal and Amalie started slowly to walk towards the main entrance. Near the extremity of the parterre a sudden rush of a part of the audience towards the stage, where the tumult had increased, separated them, and two acquaintances, pouncing on Count Esterthal, announced on "positive information" that the armistice was interrupted, that Champagny had left Altenburg, that Liechtenstein had been peremptorily recalled by Francis II., that Stadion was once more in power and war declared.

"But what the devil is happening yonder?"

The old Count turned his impassive face backwards towards the stalls. A number of French officers had sprung upon the stage and had begun to sing and gesticulate as though acting an improvised piece. Others roamed about the orchestra, wrenching the instruments from the players, and amid laughter and ironic applause began themselves to produce the most ear-splitting and discordant sounds, whilst the officers on the stage imitated the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, the mewing of cats, or neighed like horses.

"C'est une émeute," someone said beside him.

It was a riot, but as yet it was good-natured.

V

Amalie had made her way alone to the entrance. There she stopped and stood for some seconds looking back. The light was dim. The parterre of the Vienna Opera House, like the parterres of all German theatres at that period, was lighted by candles and a few oil lamps.

She was about to return in search of her father-in-law when from the direction of the boxes behind her on her

left she saw or thought she saw an officer in the uniform of Kinsky's Horse make towards her through the crowd—tall, very erect, with an air of extreme distinction at once in his features and his bearing, yet it was the bearing of a poet or artist rather than that of a soldier.

Amalie in the dusk looked at him unrecognizing, though conscious that her heart was beating wildly; then, mortally pale, she stood still, suppressing the cry of half-delirious joy and suffocating tears.

The next instance her lover was bending over her outstretched hands.

"Heinrich! Caro mio, mio diletto, mio diletto. . . ."

Her voice trembled in every syllable, but the unforgotten and unforgettable language of her girlhood was cadenced like a passion-song. It was the very language of passion; the language of all intense feeling, of suffering or of joy.

His eyes drank in like an enchanted wine each seduction of her figure, from her brow under its high nodding plumes to the brilliants that flashed on her shoes.

"How you are beautiful!" he said. "Great God, to see you again—this, this! It is madness to look at you."

"Heinrich, Heinrich, speak to me! You have come? I was going away. Whose is that uniform? How badly it fits your shoulders! It is too narrow."

She was trembling in every limb.

He laughed and his voice chimed strangely with hers, burdened with the same delirious bliss.

And maddened by her beauty, the burning rose on her face, her smile, the ardently parted lips, he bent again over her hands.

"Ah, not here," she said faintly; "this way—come this way," she entreated, "come with me." She drew him impetuously into an obscurer angle.

"Caro mio, I love you, I love you," she whispered again, and to his blinding surprise her lips touched his lips. "How

are you here? You have not told me. Or have you told me?" she repeated, dazed by her own bliss.

He laughed and answered—"I am here as one of Prince Liechtenstein's aides. Zettich—you remember little Karl August von Zettich?—I have his passport and his uniform. Seven of our men have been arrested as spies. Schönbrunn is a nest of angry wasps. But where were you going?"

She remembered Zettich. He had the courage of a demon. Like Rentzdorf he belonged to Kinsky's Horse, which since Aspern had become legendary for its courage wherever German was spoken. At Znaim Rentzdorf had at the peril of his own life saved Zettich's, rescuing him from under his horse after sabring two Polish lancers.

"Going? I do not know what I am saying. Yes, I was going, but . . ."

The uproar on the stage riveted every eye. They were for this brief moment practically alone.

"Listen, beloved," she said hurriedly. "There is a supper party before the masked ball. You know about it —the ball, I mean? Come to supper; come to me at ten. We shall go together to the Rittersaal. Toc will manage that you enter. She is in front there, talking with Markowitz and Beethoven."

The passion burning in her eyes dazzled him.

"You do not wish to see Beethoven to-night? Ah God, I have to leave you. There is padrino."

"There is nothing on earth save you," she whispered and the next instant she was standing beside padrino under the wide awning outside the Opera House.

The old Count peered with angry eyes from group to group,—carriages, sedan-chairs, phaetons, hackney coaches, link-boys, and mingling here and there with the blaze of servants' liveries the brown uniforms and white epaulettes of the new Viennese gendarmerie.

"Why are these fellows loafing outside?" he grumbled,

glaring at the gendarmes. "They ought to be clearing the house of those dogs."

He did not care a straw for the piece; but the arrogance of the French in interrupting the performance had exasperated his pride.

VI

"We are nearly arrived," Amalie said to padrino twenty minutes later. "You are not cold?"

Glancing out of the window of the carriage she saw rise, spectral in the darkness, the sinister black hexagonal tower of the Lõwel Bastion.

The old Count, still crouched in the corner into which he sank on leaving the Opera, lifted his head wearily. Had the lumbering gilt-laden Estherthal coach been his coffin he would not have greatly cared. These home-comings from the Opera always made him feel his isolation and his age. The tramp to the grave that every man must complete alone—"C'est ça, c'est ça!"

Two minutes later the carriage stopped. The link-boys thrust their torches into the sockets fixed in the iron railings. The glare lighted up the ancient stones. The smoke above the yellow flames rose in little jets of blue and grey.

Amalie sprang lightly from the carriage and swinging round stood drinking in the cool night air fragrant with shrub, flower, and tree.

In the hall, which was large and badly lighted, a servant with powdered hair came forward and handed her a letter on a silver salver. The courier, he said, was waiting to take back the answer. He was to start again for Buda-Pesth at midnight.

Amalie tore open the letter. It was, she knew, from her husband. The light from a bronze candelabra fell on her neck and finely modelled shoulders as she read.

The letter was elaborately worded, yet singularly ambiguous, and in some parts obviously insincere. He anticipated, he said, a renewal of the war. His corps had been ordered nearer to the Bohemian frontier; in two days they were to be at Troppau and there await "developments." Metternich, it was rumoured, had been recalled. He himself might be in Vienna next day; he might be detained for an indefinite time. In any case, the honour of kissing her hand was unavoidably deferred.

"Ah, merci!" she said under her breath. "God be praised for that, anyhow!"

Aloud she asked, "Where is the courier?"

"He is resting, Madame," the servant answered. "He will require a fresh horse. I have informed his Highness."

"I will give you the answer in an hour. He can have Sigismund if the Count cannot spare a mount. Rothgar, the bay, I shall want to-morrow."

"And Father Giacomo?" the servant said hesitatingly. "He came again this evening and awaits your Serenity."

But at that moment a Capuchin friar, preceded by another servant in livery, came forward, and lifting his hood discovered Fra Giacomo's fine intellectual features, the mask of the Italian priest of the higher ranks.

Involuntarily she bent her head to receive his blessing.

"Forgive me," she said in Italian. "You have been kept waiting."

"This makes amends."

She knew the imprudence and even the danger of receiving a Capuchin in her house, but danger allured her, and this man had been her mother's confessor, and, like her mother, was a Lombard of great family. During the war he had acted bravely; for, though not an Austrian, he had been one of the devoted band who in the thick of the fight had carried the wafer in a consecrated box to the dying in battle after battle from Eckmühl to Wagram.

They spoke together for some minutes in low voices. She heard again in the Lombard tongue the familiar phrases about the poverty and the suffering in Vienna; the price of bread—in the Leopoldstadt black bread had risen to ten kreutzers the loaf; no meat was to be had except horse-flesh in that quarter, and in the villages no meat of any kind. Winter was coming.

"Yes, yes; I know," she said wearily, yet not impatiently.

The friar, though her face was hidden, seemed to read her thoughts. The set of his mouth became more rigid.

To Amalie Christ had long ceased to be a force in her spiritual life, and, possessor through Rentzdorf of another vision of good and evil, she had little patience with Dom Giacomo's superficial subtleties; yet Jesus' ethics still exercized a sentimental control over her conduct; the sound of a vesper bell still had a power over her soul; she clung tenaciously to Monza's cloistered calm, to the memories of her girlhood there, her early dreams of sainthood or heroic romance.

"Shall I see the steward?" the Capuchin asked, vexed with himself, and desirous to end her embarrassment.

"Yes," she said quickly, "see Adrian; I will send him to you at once."

She gave an order to the servant.

"God keep you in His holy guard," Fra Giacomo said in Italian, pulling forward his hood.

VII

Amalie went straight to her boudoir—the room immediately adjoining that in which that morning she had discovered Toc in corset and petticoat stationed before her toilet table.

The door of this room once closed behind her, the hatefulness in things was exorcised or excluded, and in its stillness and memories she could surrender herself to her joy.

Her maid in the bedroom was already busying herself with her dress; but even for the supper she had still two hours, and for the ball she would not start till midnight at the earliest. She gave Tita some direction, ordered a bath, returned to the boudoir, and, sitting down in front of the fire, she stretched out her hands to the blaze. The flames sparkled on her rings and lighted up the modelling of her fingers and the exquisitely rounded, firm white wrists.

"The vision beatific?" she murmured, impelled by some reflection of the day and an interview with Toc late that afternoon. "Lost in this, God in me sees His end—His goal; that is the vision beatific, my beloved, O my beloved."

Her lover's face rose before her now in a celestial effulgence; her lover's voice, trembling with adoration—it had the accents of her own heart's craving, the world-soul's craving.

Sighing, she flung herself back and lay with closed eyes, conscious of the charmed stillness and faint perfumes of the room, conscious of the darkness outside, the garden, the motionless trees, the dark environing earth outstretched under the night-sky.

Here in this room, in the ornaments or in the books, as in her bedroom in the very articles on her toilet table, were objects sanctified by some hour of passion's ecstatic vision darker or diviner than its predecessors. And here above all on the shelves of a cabinet in tulip-wood, were Rentzdorf's own writings in various editions and bindings, priceless to her during this frightful campaign as to her sister Ulrica in the convent at Prague her prayer-book—a new God indeed and a new missal, but more overpoweringly glorious day by day.

And it was just this constant appeal to the universal and to the transcendental which, to her rigid own self-examining, redeemed Amalie von Esterthal's judgment upon her motives from mere self-approbation or empty self-will.

Outside God there was for her no reality, no goodness, no knowledge, no vision, no joy. But this that she lived, this that she knew, this was very God.

In the same cabinet on the same or on a separate shelf, were the writers for whom Rentzdorf had kindled her interest—the Spanish dramatists Tirso and Calderon, Jacobi's translation of Hamlet and four other Shakespearian plays, Wieland's *Oberon* and Hölderlin's romantic fantasy *Hyperion*.

She felt a smile about her lips and, opening her eyes, glanced round the fragrant twilight of the room, lit only by the fire and a single silver lamp, and closed her eyes again.

Her lover's voice thrilled in her ears; his thoughts in her spirit; his hand-clasp on her breast. Impatient to have something of his, she took out one of her favourites amongst his books — the *Runes of the Acropolis*. Rentzdorf had wished to destroy every copy but she had several.

"I hear *your* voice. You are here,—the characters, protagonist and denteragonist, the others, men and women."

"What can it be like to have a poet for a lover?" Toc had once asked her. "It must be idyllic, to sip the cream of all his thoughts—his poems, to read his books, and to know the veriest thoughts of his very heart upon all things."

"Idyllic perhaps; but stormy a little? It should not be exactly a tranquil existence—do you suppose?"

In her admiration for the *Runes* Amalie was not unjustified. The fever which tormented Rentzdorf's manhood burned in those pages which he thrust aside with so unfeigned an impatience. Greek tragedy there was recast, and spoke in accents of a spiritual anguish transfigured by his own unrest. Where, he demanded in an early paragraph, was that *Heiterkeit*, that serener calm which Winkelmann had already made fashionable as the characteristic of Greek thought, art, culture, and Greek life? Thu-

cydides was not *heiter*, nor was *Herodotus* serene. Despair, fierce suffering, was not unknown in the Cyclades; and from Pindar and from Homer, as from Archilochus and Hesiod, it was easy to cite judgments upon human life frightful as that of *Lear* or *Œdipus*. In the same manner the lords of those who know—Empedocles, Orpheus, Plato, Heracleitus, and Julian—were made in this transfiguring light to pass before the reader, and spoke or answered. And the Parthenon reappeared, this earth's masterpiece of beauty, the Doric columns, the frieze, the shapes of colossal loveliness, transfigured by the eyes that had gazed on their sun-steeped marbles; and the tragedy in stone was subtly woven into the tragedy of human life itself the transiency of things, the eternal mystery of birth, persistence, and the grave.

"He who defines Existence, defines suffering. Being is the transient; it is that which perishes and ought to perish. The Beautiful, on the other hand, is the mirage of that which is beyond Being, of that which is not yet; that which God desires to be, and to be eternally. Therefore its perfect symbol is death, and its test is the ardour of the death-desire which it provokes within man; for this desire is the desire to be one with the end towards which throughout eternity God strives." "The existent, all that is," he said in another paragraph, "is on fire with the world-soul's anguish; but to that anguish, inscrutable in its origin, the universe owes its origin; the Beautiful is the vision of that which shall arise when the world-soul's strife is attained."

She laughed in restless happiness reimagining the incident and other kindred moments. But the laugh startled her from her trance; and she recollected the waiting courier.

"Mon Dieu! To write a letter now—and to him?"

Walking up and down, her shadow moved beside her on the floor as she passed and repassed in front of the silver lamp that stood on a cabinet richly inlaid and decorated

with paintings on porcelain representing some scenes in Arcady.

But she tore herself from the seductive enticements drowning her, and sitting down she began the letter, but tore up the first copy; then very rapidly, then very slowly, weighing the syllables, she commenced a second copy. But she found the task difficult; for the more she considered the letter she had received the more she felt convinced that its words were meant not for her but for Napoleon's police.

"That?" she thought; "is it that again?"

The "That" to which she referred was her husband's visit to Vienna a few weeks ago in violation of his parole to Napoleon.

She knit her brows; but abruptly she thrust aside the fear. Nevertheless, she was careful to answer the letter in accordance with its tenor. In this she was loyal.

"It is done!" she said.

Her glad cry was like a school-girl's liberated from a task. She glanced down the page with knit brows. Her style was ornate as Count Esterthal's own. She burnt her fingers as she sealed the letter.

"Tutt' è menzogna," she said, stamping her foot involuntarily. "No; the only lie is the world's lie. This, this is reality—each timeless hour. What other truth, what other God is there or can be?"

A light as of very heaven descended on her face. Her spirit, onward-driving on waves of sunlight, rushed to the event. And in and through that soul, thus in ecstasy, a mightier, darker power strove to an end not her end, to a peace not her peace.

Her maid, re-entering, announced that the bath was ready.

"The bath?"

Amalie had forgotten her own order. She took off her necklace, her bracelets, her rings, laying them one by one on her dressing-table, and began slowly to undress.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAKING OF A POET

I

IN the autumn of 1808 it was rumoured in Viennese literary circles that Goethe was at work upon a new novel, the *Elective Affinities*. Shortly afterwards there arose one night in Rentzdorf's lodging in the Rothenthurm a discussion of the methods of fiction and the drama, and Axel Petersen, impatient to submit all literary forms to the hydraulic press of the four-act play, had derided as bad art the novelist's habit of inserting character sketches of the various personages in the romance as they successively appear. "Absurd in a drama," Rentzdorf had asked, "but is it so absurd in a novel? The novelist by a single page has to do for the reader all that in the drama is entrusted to the actor's genius, to costume, to scenery, to facial expression, gesture, voice, silences. Besides, a novel is *un miroir qui se promène*—and in everyday life what is more common than that on your first introduction to a distinguished man, every friend or acquaintance acts in just the manner that you censure in *Agathon* or *Wilhelm Meister?* To me, with all its prolixity, the latter book is serene as an autumn day in Attica."

Rentzdorf, who has noted the incident in a scrapbook destined to be worked into a volume on the art-forms of his time, can have had no anticipation that exactly a century

later it would be quoted on this page by an English writer in defence of a summary of his own career in a novel in which he figures side by side with Napoleon.

Heinrich von Rentzdorf was now in his thirty-first or thirty-second year. His life in Austria had been the life of an artist tormented by the intellectual unrest of his era—its scepticisms, political violence, spiritual ardours, reactions, and wrathful despairs.

Genius for religion is rare as genius for art. Rentzdorf possessed both.

"I can scarcely remember the time," he had said once to Count Johann, "when in my breast two passions or two wills were not in conflict—the passion for Art and the passion for Religion, the will to Beauty and the will to Truth. And to this day, when I descend into myself I recognize the same two forces. They have dominated and dominate my entire life. Their conflict *is* that life. And yet what a waste and sterile history is mine! For seven years religion to me meant no more than an incessant sifting and testing, or an endless accusing and defending of faiths and philosophies of other eras and of other minds—of one faith and philosophy above all, that of Jesus the Christ. Morning by morning I sprang from my bed and, flinging back the curtains, saw the glory of another day. Why had it been given me? And on the instant the enchantment was shattered; the splendour was fog and dust. I searched in my own heart; I brooded over the processes of my faculties; I pondered the mediæval theologians and the system-mongers of modern times. And in Kant as in Aquinas I found but variant upon variant of the dreary eternal story of Eden, Israel, Nazareth, and Golgotha. 'What art thou,' the fathers at Gratz used to say to me, 'that puttest questions unto God?' I knew it well, that priggish refrain. I knew it in St. Augustine as in Dante and St. Paul. And to

what other end was I born, I asked, except to put questions unto God? What right thus to interrogate is greater than my right? Dragged unasked out of the deep sleep of Nothingness, flung down tortured into this torture-chamber of a universe, this measureless vast of suffering in uncounted worlds down the unreckonable years—what other question shall I ask? The hour that I forget that question is blasted. And still they spoke of Jesus, as if that nursery tale, because it had amused the slow wit or served the cunning hypocrisy of eighteen hundred years, were an all-heal; until at length his very name became a symbol of ennui; his religion, an angry loathing, a triumphant imposture or dull fatuity that, like the Ptolemaic system of the stars, for eighteen hundred years had made bestial the European mind. Why had this dogmatist, Aryan, or Hebrew, robbed me of my birthright, my spirit's unfettered contemplation of the world, beggared posterity and made all our thinking, all our faiths acceptances or contradictions of his own theorizings and poor scheme of things? 'Jesus a God?' I could no longer see in him even an heroic man. . . . "

Count Johann laughed.

"And yet," Rentzdorf went on in a changed voice, "there had been a time, there had been a time. . . . My God, Johann, the very midnight of the world-soul's anguish seemed to possess my soul when at Gratz I heard in St. Ægidius the *Tenebræ*. Now when I see those same white-robed Dominicans I say in my heart—These are they who lie, not unto men, but unto God. Eh bien, that seven years' struggle terminated only for another to begin. I had rejected Christ. But the highest in me still seemed at war with itself, God with God. I studied nature and read books, for months I sacrificed days and nights in solitary meditation, hoping that some vision, some wide principle, would arise within me or without me; I admired or argued against the principles of others; but in vain. Was I, the German

who had rejected Christ, to accept the Greek Plato or the Hindu Gotama? The former's hair-splitting myths, the latter's renunciation, which is a cheaper death, were meaningless as Kant's imperative or Spinoza's *causa sui*. And what was their mandate to me except 'Submit! Submit! Christ is the best. Be wise and stick to him.'"

"And believing this," Johann had answered, "thinking these thoughts, you yet waste yourself in going to war against Bonaparte, that more self-confident, brilliant mediocrity?"

"Believing this, thinking these things, I go to fight against Bonaparte. Hero or mediocrity, he fights for his own hand."

Even to indifferent observers of Rentzdorf's youth, the deeply religious bias of his nature quickly revealed itself.

"He will never make either a diplomatist or a councillor," his uncle had said to Rentzdorf's mother. "He has too hot a head for affairs. Send him to Gratz. The Jesuit fathers will at least teach him the ancient languages and the rudiments of modern theology. Every man in these times ought to be able to read Zeno and Plato and yet have the chance of growing up a Christian, if in the long run he prefers Galilee to Athens."

Rentzdorf's uncle, a man in mid-life, with blue eyes and a fine full-grown beard, dressing in top-boots and a green hunting suit, was a professed Epicurean, but cultured and tolerant, living in tranquil indolence from year's end to year's end on his domain near Mohacz—those acres of heath and mountain scrub dotted by blast furnaces and copper mines, and in more fertile spots by farm steadings, across which Rentzdorf played as a child. Feudalism in such retreats had still in Austria its full vigour, unaffected by Joseph II.'s "reforms."

Two months after this interview Rentzdorf was at Gratz. Its fortress, dark with memories of the wars of Ferdinand

II. and Wallenstein, its watchmen telling the hours of the night in the Styrian dialect, and at dawn saluting the rising sun with a blare of trumpets and the long roll of the Styrian drum, made a background of romance to his boyish musings.

At Gratz his intellectual supremacy quickly showed itself. Every form of study allured him in turn—the classical languages, music, drawing, painting, mathematics, modelling in clay, verse-writing in French and Italian, as in German. His imagination already answered to Nature's summons. Now he would stand rapt before a sunset, now before a pageantry of feigned experiences vivid as actuality, triumphs, heroic defeats, strange loves; at another time he would turn from his sketch-book or easel in a frenzy of despair, staring at a wide and most living landscape whose twilight mystery he felt in every throbbing vein but could not fasten to his canvas.

The multiplicity of his gifts wore down his health and irritated his teachers. His manners puzzled or enraged his companions; for he was already immoderate in his attachments as in his antipathies, and subject to paroxysms of jealousy or insight which darkened or vexed his mind irresistibly as a storm the lake.

An affection of the eyes suddenly paralysed all effort and gave his overstrained mind the repose it needed. Reading was forbidden; painting had to be abandoned forever; but he was allowed paper and a pencil. In this crisis the old power over words, proved by the ease with which he could imitate in Latin the cadences of Propertius and in French those of Racine, came as a beneficence from on high. Poetry became for him the art of arts, superior even to music and sculpture.

It was the year 1794.

Immured within the Jesuit seminary, Rentzdorf and other young Austrians knew next to nothing of the true sequence of events in France. The States General had met; the

Bastille had fallen; the first republic had been proclaimed; a Bourbon king and a Habsburg princess had been guillotined; Danton had spoken his great defiance, Valmy had been fought, Brunswick and Klerfayt repulsed, Belgium annexed, and the war begun. But to the Jesuits' pupils all this had been presented through a coloured and distorting medium.

Gradually something of the truth pierced the ramparts of calumny or silence. The effect was correspondingly great. To these young men, whilst they had slept the morning sleep of youth, a new heaven and a new earth appeared to have arisen. By the Jesuit fathers the principles of the Encyclopédie and the teachings of Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot, and Voltaire, had been branded as those of Antichrist; but when the victories of Pichegru and Moreau followed those of Dumouriez, when in the north Belgium and Holland were overrun and, in the east, the frontiers of France extended to the Alps, the question flamed up in every generous heart—Can these indeed be the victories of Antichrist? Can God indeed have laid under His interdict the writings which have kindled such heroism as this of Marceau, Hoche, Kléber, and Desaix? Is Liberty indeed the fruit of the tree of Death? And is it to extend the dominion of Antichrist that the armies of France are conquering a world?

The date for Rentzdorf to leave the seminary was approaching; yet for months he looked forward to that date not with joy but with passionate regret.

Meanwhile, his father had died; his mother and sisters, though retaining the house in Vienna, had settled in Hungary on a small estate near his uncle's domain. There Rentzdorf, now a student in Vienna University regularly spent his vacations, passing long days alone in the woods or in his boat on the Danube, with a sister to whom he was attached, often till far into the night, thinking his own thoughts, dreaming his own dreams, whilst he watched the

passage of a star from branch to branch as it crossed a rift of sky.

It was at the University that his friendship with Bolli and with Count Johann Markowitz began. As Austrians they were in this dilemma; they were bound to hate France, yet in their inner life they found no thought worth thinking which did not derive its colour and its vivacity from that nation's literature.

II

The ideal of knowledge and life here upon the earth and now had for a period been to Rentzdorf the determining result of the Revolution.

Later he was to put to this knowledge the question—"What art thou?" and to this rejoicing in the earth here and now—"Why art thou? And in what and in whom shall I rejoice?"

But for a time these things were their own end.

To know all, to experience all, to be all—to know the bond attaching this Dædalian world to its Originator, to know the bond uniting his own heart to the universe and to its Originator; to rejoice in all—in man's wisdom, the creations of art, woman's living beauty, the mountains, statues, music, to love all rigid and flowing things, memory-haunted rocks, palaces, lonely rivers, the forests' pillared shade—"these to me are God," Rentzdorf at that time asserted: "I know no other. Yes; I see God most just there where most you deny God."

In Vienna, its men and women, Rentzdorf found opportunities in abundance of testing one article of his creed—to experience all. Europe at that period contained no society in which the life-desire could so easily or so completely be realized—beautiful, idle, or brilliant women, the froth and lees of every court and capital in Europe, politicians, diplo-

matists, men of science, and men of fashion, poets, painters, sculptors, musicians.

A miniature at this period portrays Rentzdorf as tall, slender, dark-haired, dark-eyed; his features already force the beholder to return to them, speculative. His own social rank, his youth, the audacities of his wit, the publication of his first poems, the part he took in the campaign of Marengo, opened every door.

A woman's passion shattered the torpor invading him, and tore him from his self-destroying dream of pleasure.

At Mohacz, whilst still a pupil in the seminary, he had met and in secret loved Irene Apponyi, who was four years older than himself and the wife of a neighbouring landowner, a Magyar noble. Indolent, sensuous, and self-indulgent, she had inflamed the boy's passions and riveted his infatuation; to her he wrote every intimate thought and for her he composed verses, imaginary scenes, dialogues, sketches of dramas. But at the end of two months the inexorable day of the return to Gratz had come; yet he had never forgotten that first terrible joy, nor was it, apparently, forgotten by her. Nevertheless, through the appointment of her husband to the Dresden Court, for five years he had not once seen her again. Now, in the winter of 1800–1801, she suddenly confronted him in the ripe splendour of womanhood, a leader of one of the most reckless coteries of Vienna. She was a lady of many adventures; but she spoke in regret and tenderness of "other days," describing in this veiled way their first tempestuous meetings; and, by some devil's art, she managed to adjust this new or this old "friendship."

The caprice of the woman of fashion was to the young poet an exalted and exalting passion. At first she was amused by his fervour and his sincerity; and when his daring made him dangerous, she affected anger and refused him her house. Misery and a vast fear brought him to the

verge of madness. She relented; but when she attempted to "explain things" and regulate their future, it was in words that to him, in his ignorance, seemed purposely chosen to torture or destroy him. Irene's voice was still to him a song; but as she spoke that night it was as though his skull had been opened and molten lead were drop by drop let fall upon his brain.

"Dearest, dearest boy, I am seven and twenty. Why should it matter so much to you that my lips have been kissed by others? Or that others before you, as you express it, should have been pressed to my breast? See! Is it not enough that *you* now kiss those lips and that I press *you* to this breast, that you call leprous and tainted? Is this leprosy, or this? Dear Heinrich, *Werther* is very fine as a story; but in real life, he finds another Charlotte or puts up with Albert. And why do you object to Lothar? He is my oldest friend. Be reasonable or I will go away again; for I cannot yet see how I could have acted otherwise than I have acted. And certainly I cannot see that I am doing anything wrong."

Irene Apponyi's lesson, though in the end it struck home, and nearly killed the neophyte, her lover and her pupil in life-experience. In the frightful desolation that rushed down upon his spirit Rentzdorf had perhaps the first perception of the tremendous if sombre vision which afterwards dominated his art and all his thought—the vision of this universe as an eternal illusion born of God's eternal suffering, God's eternal strife to end that anguish and, beyond that illusion, to find reality and deliverance.

But three weeks later, when he woke from the fever and through the mists of delirium saw this same Circe, disguised as a boy-student, seated by his bed, watching him with haggard, grief-tormented eyes, he had to confront yet another life-experience, and from her frenzied embraces and tears school himself to a yet steadier gaze into the

riddling perplexities of a woman's heart, and the modern temperament.

Had her cynicism destroyed itself or was it from the outset a feigning? Or had his passion at last kindled her passion? Certainly she who but a month ago had shut her doors on him because of a social indiscretion, would not have run this risk for a caprice, however flattering to her vanity.

"A madman's dream, this universe. This life is all, yet this life is nothing," he told himself during his slow convalescence; "but it is, it is Irene Apponyi's mouth. There is no meaning anywhere; love is a lie; woman's constancy not only a dream but a bad dream. Truth is meaningless as God. Let us act that faith, live that creed."

A fearful liaison then began, born amid blood-lust and soul-despair, half-wondering, mutual desires and mutual contempt. It was a chaos, but a chaos above which the lightnings of their unforgettable first raptures flashed and glimmered. They passed hours in the same society, in a noisy or frantic gaiety that was not even pleasure; that at its best was oblivion, at its worst, the brutalization of every ennobling sentiment. Alone together afterwards, they tortured each other, now by venomous allusions to their mutual infidelities, now by studiedly maladroit confessions or incriminating silences. Their assignations became a hell to which each came resolute to torture the other; yet they met and met; for, riveted together by some mysterious bond, those hours were the days' crown, those miseries the only sanctitudes that this earth reserved for either.

"Life-hate?" Rentzdorf once reflected in a moment of sinister insight. "Has that become life's goal to me? And therefore hatred of her, who is still to me life's fairest, most consecrate expression. I wonder. I wonder."

All his ancient enthusiasms, all his mystic hopes and questionings, now became the target of his own or his mistress's

derision. They laughed together in detestable intimacy at his first letters. There was no God; or if there had ever been a God, He had long since destroyed Himself in self-horror at the hideous abortion, this universe—this world in which not one heart's desire is or can be fulfilled, and not one soul's question answered.

III

In this conflict of perversity and cynicism it was the woman who was vanquished.

Outwardly, she did not change her conduct. She even exaggerated her own crimes; but when she spoke of her lovers or her admirers it was with icy lips, and a fearful intentness came into her face when she cross-questioned him upon the way in which he had passed the hours or the days of her enforced absences from Vienna.

"What do I want?" she had whispered with set teeth after a meeting of unusually fierce recrimination, in which the mask of cynicism was flung off entirely. "What every woman wants and never obtains; what every woman seeks and never finds."

She now began at each meeting to lead their conversation back to Mohacz, to the scenery of their early friendship, the lake, the woods, to his letters, and their long strange talks.

"I was at least your first love. In your memory I shall have that place, Heinrich. Nothing can take that from me."

Her tears seemed to Rentzdorf the tears of a morbid or spurious sentiment, yet this became her repeated cry. And furious that she should have this consolation, or that even in this detail she should be false to their creed, he determined to deny even his own past.

"Are you so sure?" he answered the next time she re-

peated the assertion. "Every woman thinks she is a boy's first love. Perhaps. Who can ever tell?"

Stupefied, she raised her head and looked at him; and ruthless and shameless, he had forged details.

"Perhaps? You say 'perhaps'?" she had breathed like a person stunned. "Helena Nicholævna? O my God—I do not wish it to have been her. Tell me; you must be lying?"

And a horrible terror had come into her wide-open eyes, making her face rigid and grey like a face carved in grey stone.

Half an hour later, as she rose to return home, "Well," she had said, drawing on her gloves, "I owe to you to-night the longest, steadiest stare into the abyss I have ever had. It is health-giving as strong pure air."

Disturbed by her words as by her manner, disturbed above all by the vileness of his own part in this hideous incident, Rentzdorf that night had written to her, recanting his words; but instantly determining to see her in the morning, he had burnt the letter. Despite the resolution, he was unable to sleep. Fear, the unmistakable tragic fear, was upon him.

"But what fear? And for whom? Not for her. What greater gift could I, even by a lie, have given her than just that same steady stare into the abyss? Reality is there."

Yet the meanings of the great tragedies were plain, the black root in things from which these night-pieces blossom, and the tragedies actually lived by men and women seemed, in his half-dream, strangely near to him.

Next day, going to her early, he found her half-dressed lying on a sofa with her hair down. With a wild cry she had sprung to her feet and, clinging to him, had confessed her act. Horror-struck, he had struggled from her clasp. For the woman whose kisses martyred his lips was a dying woman. Reckless of everything save her suffering, he

called her maid; a physician was summoned; the poison appeared to be counteracted; but five weeks later Irene Apponyi was dead.

Rentzdorf had to fight two duels, first with her husband, then with a lover.

Severely wounded in the latter, Rentzdorf had, for the last week of his mistress's life lain at the point of death himself, and Irene's dying moments were soothed by a recrudescence of her childhood's religion and by the belief that her lover would not survive her.

Rentzdorf on his recovery had left Vienna, and passed the winter in Italy; then, from Venice, he had abruptly started for Greece, making the voyage to the Piræus on a trader's sloop.

IV

Four and a half years went by.

In Rentzdorf's life the history of those years is the history of the process by which he attained that newer vision of God and of the universe which became for him Time's last word upon man's destiny and upon Being's drama and Being's doom.

Hitherto Rentzdorf had been merely abreast of the farthest-forward ranging thought of his time. Even in the rebellious anarchic despair of the Irene Apponyi period he had co-equals in men like Zacharias Werner and Friedrich Schlegel. Now, in the daring as well as in the steadiness of his thought, he outstrips all his contemporaries. His life becomes the voyage of a soul towards God, or, as he afterwards described it, the voyage of God in his soul towards the final consciousness of God's destiny and God's doom.

Rentzdorf passed those years partly in travel, partly in prolonged visits to Mohacz. "In art, in art and its sereni-ties," he told himself as he slowly recovered from the remorse and fever into which Irene Apponyi's suicide had

plunged him, "there is the peace imperishable; there is the medicine my spirit needs."

And he gave himself to the sedulous study of poetry and the perfecting of his craft.

But the quiet of the soul which this task brought was premature. The pitiless insight of the mystic urged him beyond this illusion as it had urged him beyond Girondinism and the illusions of '93, and Kant's religiose philosophy. If science left answerless every question worth answering; if knowledge of the past was pedantry; if thought was futile and passion a disease, was it not folly to torment his mind in a search for the perfect verse or the perfect phrase into which to press the essence of that science, that knowledge, that passion, or that thought?

And once more the only life-choice was between a self-condemned feverous striving and the dull inactivity of despair.

"You ask too much of life," his uncle said to him. "No one has ever solved the Sphinx's riddle and no one ever will. Read the Stoics and Montaigne. Nature too teaches us calm. The sea still lifts her waves, the mountains their immovable peaks, and the green returns to the woods."

But to Rentzdorf this "calm" would have meant treason against himself, and the surrender of the only purpose that made time endurable. Forbidden too the return to the blind tumult of Viennese society. Already with Irene Apponyi he had outlived all that. With her he had scaled the topmost summits of Rebellion, pursuing passion with her into its most sacred and secret recesses, living day by day the accusations and the denials which others feigned.

"But our rebellion," he now said, urged by sympathy or by some spirit of half-extinguished remorse, "that too was God—O, very God of God! And for me, so far as woman is concerned, truth and heroism are buried in her grave. She has found calm; mine is the anguish still."

And in this *agonia* of his own soul he turned, revitalized, in the pursuit of life's stronger interpretings and the newer vision, the God that is to be.

The memory of Irene's life-despair and reckless candour had re-kindled his will as once her lips had the power to re-inflame his desires.

v

It was the winter of 1803–4.

Napoleon's original and semi-mystic phase had ended. The prophet to whom in 1800 all men looked as the harbinger of a new era had become the rival of Trajan, the imitator alternately of Constantine and of Charlemagne.

Rentzdorf at Mohacz, in the long winter nights of that year, had with a fresh and tingling zest resorted to study and to books. His purpose in this effort had become better defined and more precise. The religions and the philosophies, he argued, were indeed vain. The passionless, pithless God of Kant or the acrobatic God of Hegel were as intolerable as the tribal God of Israel, even when transfigured by Isaiah and by Jesus into the God of all the earth. Ignorance had receded with the centuries. Knowledge had come no nearer. In the end the failure of metaphysics was complete as the failure of religion. But was despair therefore inevitable? By a resolute gaze into those boundless spaces, now flung wide to man's scrutiny, and by an equally resolute study of the æons of a dateless past, of the chronicles of the rocks, and the annals of man, and by a fixed meditation simple and sincere, upon the spirit itself and its inward workings, might there not be vouchsafed him, even at this late hour, some truer, profounder vision of things?

"Others like Kant have gone to Nature and the past in order to find proofs of a preconceived God and a predetermined moral law. They brought home the treasure they took with them. Compassless I, I go out into an uncharted

darkness, a sea without a star; I know not even if God is there or if there is a God. I strive but to see what *is* there —what newer vision of supernal hope, or the eclipse of all hope, infernal night, and the coming of final despair."

The writings of D'Alembert and Laplace, of Cuvier and of Bichat, stimulated his ardour. Days grew to weeks, the weeks to months. His first quiet studiousness became a fury of enthusiasm which, without food and without sleep, hurried his spirit from volume to volume, and urged his transported mind through one untracked or forbidden arena of thought after another.

From the astronomer's figures and the anatomist's lecture-room he passed to man's history. Enriched by his survey he had come back once more to the laboratory and to the anatomist's plates, devoting himself to each study in turn with a specialist's care and the prophetic fervour of a mystic seeking the vision of God. Man was identical with Nature, yet greater than Nature—and in man's soul, therefore, not in Nature, were the clearest hieroglyphics of God. Yet in nature he might find a key by which to approach these hieroglyphics. There was his first maxim.

But where are those hieroglyphics most accumulated and most concentrated?

At the university and at Gratz he had worked at the history of the Middle Ages, Aquinas and Abelard and Dionysios were not less familiar than Plato and Empedocles. To these he now added the religions of other races and earlier times—the lost faiths of Mithras and Isiris, the Vedas and the Avesta, recently made accessible by the researches of Anquetil-Duperron and Schlegel. He re-traversed in imagination the leisured spaces of Egypt and the remoter East visualizing as in a spectral pageantry the kingdoms and half-fabulous empires that shift and move from the Oxus to the Tigris, from the Tigris eastward to the Ganges and westward to the Ionian Sea.

If he failed now, he told himself, it would be the last failure. Vanquished in this final *élan* of the soul, it would be forever.

Months passed. The midnight within him and around him stood black and silent as the midnight above the polar seas. In history the hideousness of man's annals alternately nauseated or appalled him. In religion the puerility of the creeds amazed or terrified his reason. What satirist from another planet could invent so savage an indictment against the human race as the records of any single religion, Druidic, Persian, Hindu, Christian, afforded? And in philosophy the timidity or avarice of the temporizers, the professional men at the universities, the defeats of the brave, the martyrs to Truth, added to the gloomy influence of history and religion.

Could a spirit chained to such a planet, portion of such a race, ever hope to discover a truth worth knowing? And the God of that history and this fabric—who is He that sits on high and watches the drama in this blood-dripping amphitheatre of a world?

The last horror invaded him. It rose within him at dawn and by night it closed around him, resistless as a flood tide.

"It is not my own disaster—not my own. It is the failure of man. It is the failure of God. . . ."

"If God is against me," cried Mohammed in one of his blackest depressions, "I will appeal to the djins." And in a similar onset of discouragement and defiant despair we find Rentzdorf writing, "My journey to Damascus? Each morning that journey recommences. For Saul of Tarsus in an hour the conflict was ended. He accepted another man's vision and was at peace. But I? God's own vision of God's end—that I seek, that only, and now I think the God within me is blind. From His eyes, not mine, the scales must fall." But at another time and in another mood he writes:

"I clamour still for an exterior faith, for some hope to which I can cling, for some creed in which I can believe. Fool! What hope has God except despair? And in what *credo* does the Most High believe? Who has drawn out into articles His Confession?"

VI

Unannounced, the vision at length broke in Rentzdorf's mind. His soul's voyage was ended. From the deepest depths, the all-denier had climbed to the summit, the all-affirmer. The scales, in his own daring metaphor, fell from God's eyes, and the universe which but yesterday was an enginery of unpurposed pain, confused as a madman's dream, stood out in ordered beauty, a temple lit by a single all-illumining thought.

This thought which informs his later writings, above all his *Prometheus*, Rentzdorf has expressed in various aspects, ethical and metaphysical; but their unifying conception is that of an all-suffering, all-striving God—*der leidende, strebende Gott*. Anguish—that is the first trait in the new portraiture of the world-soul. God is no longer the dreary Omnipotent of the creeds. In a pain-racked universe a struggling pain-racked Deity seeks by incessant strife and by creations of ever-ascending beauty and power to deliver Himself and nature from the suffering which is Being's essence, to attain the quiet which is Being's grave.

"Bist du überwinden?" says a character in one of Rentzdorf's latest books. "Art thou oppressed by the tempests of pain which in never-ending circles rave round this planet? God's is that suffering. Is thy spirit made frantic by the cries of madness-driven hunger and rage which shrill through the undated eras from the deeps of vanished forests and the caverns of undiscovered seas? God's is that hunger, and that rage is God's. And yonder, out yonder in the midnight,

in those star-galaxies which hang like the frost-jewelled gossamer of the skies, in those rushing suns and their black and retinued orbs, dost thou surmise the theatres of the same fury and the same pain? Yea, and in Time's abyss, where world on world lies sepulchred, and, in the havoc of the æons, sunk systems moulder beside their extinguished suns, doth thy spirit, darkly conjecturing, brood over the embryons and first-beginnings of universes of anguish and dark eternities of woe? All is God's. The fury and the strife are His: and His that inextinguishable anguish and the woe."

Elsewhere Rentzdorf faces and answers the question of the Vedas—"What moved Prajapati, the High God, out of the dark sleep of nothingness to create the worlds?" "Suffering moved Him, suffering which is Being's essence, and the desire to end that suffering and, with it, Being itself. For this is the tragic character of Being and of Being's God, that only by destruction can He create and only by creation attain His own and Being's goal—dark Annihilation's ecstasy."

But if the world is moulded in affliction, if a suffering God to assuage His suffering created the universe, whence arises its beauty, its structured grandeur, and the multitudinous magnificence of its unending pageantry?

The Beauty of the universe, Rentzdorf answers, springs from the mirage which arises within God's spirit when, in the *agonia* of His unending strife, He visions the attainment of His goal—the beginning beyond the end. For as God approaches nearer to His deliverance from Being, so He shapes the worlds in higher beauty ever nearer to the pattern of that deliverance. Before great Beauty we long to die, because our soul is then caught up into God's and discerns the Reality, His and Nature's end.

For a period Rentzdorf was harassed by doubts. "Is this thing of God," he asked, "or is it not of God?"

Gradually doubt vanished.

Time had recovered its majesty. Earth was reinvested in mystery. Man's life recovered its argument; art its wonder.

The religions of the past—Osiris, Jahve, the Buddha, and the religion of Calvary, the Stoic's creed, Plotinus, the Tabriz mystic's resuscitation of Islam—these and other faiths are rejected by reason even as religions for this earth, and what imagination, Rentzdorf asks, can tolerate even the greatest of them as the religion, not only of this earth, but of the spheres that out yonder wander undetected around other suns? Yet in each and all of these faiths he discovered anticipations, strange foreshadowings, sudden far-borne illuminings of his own vision, fragments as of a scattered dream-tragedy.

"And that faith or that vision? In this, in this," he said with an awed and shuddering heart, "in this has there not at last arisen, after the unreckonable æons, populous with power and beauty, has there not at last arisen a religion under whose sombre, dread, yet all-alluring dominion the mind can imagine world on world finding peace?" Already on this earth dim annunciations from the past were borne to him, dim yet certain harbingers from every region; already on this earth race after race as it attained its zenith was for one instant, if only in dying, vouchsafed the tragic insight, the power to arraign. Assyria, Hellas, Rome, India, the Middle Age, each in turn had hovered on the verge of the Tragic Vision.

"Time's last word?" he muttered. "Indeed, in very deed, is this God's inmost thought in man's soul enunciated?"

And again, in a second all-transcending hour, the vision came to him. It was a July midnight. Thunder moaned in the distance. In the woods round Mohacz the leaves above the stems, pillars of ebon gloom, shivered with the

presentiment of the coming storm. Harassed and with working thought, he had quitted the oppressive rooms of the château for the cool fragrance of the forest. Despair was on him again, when suddenly, as if the physical storm had burst, there was all about him and within him a supernal light. And again he spoke the supreme affirmation. God of very God, in that night silence and storm anguished in his anguish, strove in his striving, was victorious in his victory. Beyond the thunderous canopy he heard the fire-torrent of the suns roar through the spaces. Then within his spirit there came a mighty hush. Like a cloud anchored at evening he saw the total universe hang in iridescent mystery.

Then thought snapped. Vision was all.

A frightful exultancy and depression marked the following days. The artist in him was wrestling with the thinker. How was his art to compass any expression of his faith? A singular fear of death assailed him; and, with it, the fear of leaving his vision unrealized and unstated.

"Fear? What is it that I fear?" he said, rising in sudden illumination above this mood. "If not by me then by another this shall be uttered. The God that is to be—how shall He remain hid? If not to me then to another He would have revealed Himself. Fear? Why should I fear? There is one thing only a man should fear—lest God should fail!"

Yet as the days passed and quiet replaced exaltation and reason the fever of the mind, as piece by piece in templed wonder the system of dynamic pantheism rose before his imagination, it was the truth, the sincerity, not the excellence or the inspiration of his vision which concerned Rentzdorf, examining it, testing it in every fashion, applying it to ethics, applying it to logic, to metaphysic, to psychology. No man could have been more impatient of that braggartism and self-laudation which, in modern times, disfigure the

writings of Nietzsche as well as the histrionic egoisms of Wagner. Rentzdorf had still the good breeding of the eighteenth century.

From a thousand fluctuant schemes for giving an art-form to his central thought he at last concentrated his powers on one. This was the Prometheus myth. Rejecting as pedantic and obsolete the form of a trilogy, yet compelled by the vastness of the subject, the personages and the material, to paint on a wide canvas, Rentzdorf divided the drama in two parts—*Prometheus the Fire-bringer* and *Prometheus the Death-bringer*. Into the former, working at white heat, he wove, in inspiration upon inspiration, a picture of earth and man's life as it presented itself to the highest-erected minds in man's past and in his own era—a word-picture of Time and God, as in the days of his despair and soul-wrestle Time and God had appeared to himself. In the Second Part, *Prometheus the Death-bringer*, distributed into four colossal Acts, he depicted in terrible scene on scene the conflict of earth's former gods against the new vision of God. There, in the breast of Prometheus, the God that had been was at war with the God that is to be. The interest of the Second Part centred in the transformation of Prometheus from the Life-bringer into the Death-bringer, from the Titan or demi-god—who, in antagonism to the Zeus-God, rapt in cold omnipotence, wishes to re-clothe earth in joy and peace—into the seer or visionary hero who looks beyond this earth and beyond the universe of Being to a state higher than Being and the God of Being.

VII

A modern critic, John Halford, has pointed out that Rentzdorf's *Prometheus the Titan* might be described as a world-drama having for its central subject "The Tragedy of God." And it is not only the boldest and most original

of Rentzdorf's own works, but, as Halford in the same essay affirms, it is perhaps the profoundest work of that era; for Werner in his speculative dramas ended in mere Romanism, and Goethe, in the *Second Faust*, imparts to us no new vision, but simply blends into a wayward unity the ideals of Dante and the ideals of a later utilitarian age. Frederick the Great's activities in his last years anticipate the close of the *Second Faust*. But in Rentzdorf's drama a new portraiture of God and of the universe is at least essayed. Nevertheless, the *Prometheus* of Rentzdorf has, as Halford acknowledges, the defects, if it has also the merits, of Æschylean tragedy. Its men and women are shifting masks of God; the motives or passions which impel or dominate them are flashes of the world-soul's will.

All in the drama is on a huge scale and full of shadowy magnificence—the vocabulary, the style, the verse-forms, the characters, the scenery. In this respect it suggests in literature only the *Oresteia* or *Lear;* in art, the Medici chapel or the greater symphonies of Beethoven—Rentzdorf's own friend and in some respects his follower.

The opening scene of Part I presents an immense plain covered with the havoc of war—the ruins of cities and villages, the smoking débris of palaces and temples. Night is falling. In the distance the trumpets of a conquering host ring out joyously in pursuit of a vanquished and retreating foe. Gradually they die away into the twilight. Night deepens and total silence possesses the scene. In the foreground stands a half-demolished altar and near it a pillar blackened by fire. Beside this pillar the young warrior-poet Kallias, wrapped in a soldier's mantle, looks down on the dead still sweet face of a boy of fifteen—his brother. Like himself he had risen in revolt against Hybristides, the tyrant whose distant trumpets a minute ago broke the twilight silences. The mad blind lust for revenge rages in Kallias; but all is shadowed by the thought—On whom is

he to avenge the fallen boy? "Man's misery is complete; earth cries to earth in anguish. And the Zeus-God, the creator and afflictor, where in His throne? On the tyrant? Yesterday by this temple on the forest edge I saw the hawk's beak rise red from the womb of a hare with young; the hare and its brood have peace. The hawk's torment when in life endures. Let Hybristides live!"

In Kallias and in his courage and in his dream-purposes Rentzdorf had wrought a study of the youthful Bonaparte, touched by Hamlet, dulled and unnerved in every act by his life-hate and life-weariness. But Prometheus enters and all is resolution, all is burning energy. Prometheus is not man's foe; he is not even the foe of Hybristides; he is the enemy of God, the deathless antagonist of the Zeus-Creator who, secure of his own eternity and self-centred in his changeless omnipotence, sees world on world roll on in agony from the first embryonic throb of being and of pain to the last protesting cry of blind accusing madness-driven decay. To destroy the Zeus-God, to re-create on a new plan earth and all the worlds, to glut Being's rage with everlasting continuous power and light and joy—this is Prometheus's enterprise, and in the first abrupt trochaics of his challenge the spectators, Magyar and Austrian alike, easily discerned the defiant ardour which, in their own era, had thrilled the great spirits of the Revolution—Mirabeau, Danton, Vergniaud, and the Girondins. Earth's last illusion was not withered.

This First Part of the drama ends in titantic gloom. Freedom's hosts are everywhere vanquished; Kallias and Prometheus, the mortal and immortal antagonists of the Zeus-God, are fallen. Kallias and his companions-in-arms have been massacred by the mob, hounded on by the priests; Prometheus, in rage and mad surprise, has sunk, death-defiant and God-defiant, under the earthquake and the thunderbolt; and on this earth and in all the spaces of the

worlds it is Night, Night eternal, and the lamentings of the dying, the moans or accusing grief of the living, rise round the funeral pyres of the dead.

The midnight and the despair are not the midnight and the despair of the defeated host only in tragic overthrow; but the midnight and despair of Time itself and the worlds.

This prodigious gloom, as of worlds in eclipse, still possesses the stage when the spectators reassemble for the Second Part. But the tortured cries of the dying, the loud or muttered grief and rage round the pyres of the dead have ceased. Yet a voice is heard, low, solitary, but infinitely majestic, infinitely sorrowful; and gradually, as the eyes become accustomed to the night, a vastness within the vastness is discerned, a Presence, a shape colossal yet uncertain in its outlines, aweing the heart in proportion as it allures it by a sense of unsolved and insoluble mysteriousness. It is the Zeus-God. It is the Zeus-God, not in insulting victory, not the possessor of a frigid unending omnipotence; but speaking like a god in anguish, suffering yet unconquered, agonizing yet unbending from his path.

Prometheus, long since buried under the avalanche, is now storming his way back to the upper air. A new war and new suffering are near. And not in resentment but in strange terrible sympathy, held by the awful gloom, the spectators listen to the Zeus-God's apologia and lament.

"What is thy suffering beside my suffering, and the anguish of a million million worlds beside mine? For I am the inventor of Death, and the discoverer of Life am I. Yea, to deliver these my universes from their suffering and my soul from its anguish I created and I create. In me is fulfilled the tragic purpose of the worlds; the Doom's beginnings and the Doom's ending. The malediction of my worlds is heavy upon Me; yet the voice wherewith they curse Me is my voice. For I am the sin of my worlds, and their redemption am I. . . .

"And for him who yonder has sunk overwhelmed, yea, for Prometheus, my best-loved, rebel of my rebel-thought, doom of my tragic doom, what is your compassion beside my compassion or your wrath beside my wrath? But he shall rise again. Made strong by my thought, and by the secrets of the grave instructed, he shall arise. Even now he is here!"

Lightnings at the word split the shroud of universal gloom, lightnings that coalesce into a light, into a wide-streaming, sunny, and beneficent radiance; and steeped in immortal youth, in wonder and immortal felicity, this earth is seen, this earth is seen outstretched, clothed in all her zones in the splendour and everlasting tranquil joy of Prometheus's ideal and Prometheus's dream.

Vanquished, the Titan has accomplished that which, a victor, he would never have accomplished. But the curse of transiency still oppresses. To remove this curse Prometheus prepares himself for this last war—the war which is to give eternity and reality to this fair and deceitful semblance of a vision.

But there is a change in Prometheus. He speaks the old challenges, the old watchwords; but his strange, troubling yet fixed and most haunting cadences announce some darker thought or unresolved doubt, numbing his purpose. His voice, the spectators discern with a shudder, is nearer to the voice of the Zeus-God, his dread adversary.

"It is impossible," says Axel Petersen in his critique of the play which appeared two days later in the *Mercure de Vienne*, "to narrate the suspense, the alternations of surprise and questioning wonder and admiration which this Second Part of the drama created in us. Gradually we unravel Prometheus's secret; we understand his hesitation. He has discovered that the Zeus-God in seeking to destroy mankind has acted not in caprice and hate but in compassion and in love; that Kallias, the mortal poet, in the First

Part of this tremendous work, possessed an insight denied as yet to the immortal son of Clymene; that from the highest life the extremest death-desire is born; and that the mark of the tragic vision and the attainment of Being's consummating glory is the intensity with which the human soul, in art before a great tragedy, in action before some mighty passion frustrated, arraigns Being itself and Being's God."

In the last war, more furious and if possible wider in its destroying rage than the first, Prometheus is again vanquished, and this time forever. It is Annihilation's victory. His immortality becomes mortal, and as he sinks in eternal night, the world-doom and the God-doom, Being's total ablation, are clearly foreboded; yet even in that horror-striking moment, it is upon the Zeus-God that the spectators' hearts are concentrated, and in the chorus which concludes the entire drama they hear at once the dirge for Prometheus and the pæan and death-song of the Zeus-God, also, of the Spirit of the Universe itself.

"Behold the courses of the evening, how they gather above the sunset, squadron behind squadron arrayed in their glory! What splendour! What brightness! Their forms outnumber the forest in multitude, and their hues, the mine—crimson and emerald, amethyst and gold. But the sun goeth down, and their glory is withered. So shall I sink, so shall I, the everlasting God, sink and go down; and the cloud-pavilions, my worlds, shall be dispersed and vanish away. But I know whither I go, voyaging beyond Being to my timeless rest; yea, I know whither I go.

"Behold, I show you a mystery within a mystery. I perish and my worlds perish. Their anguish is ended, and on the pathways of infinitude their dust is no more seen. But I am the anguish of my worlds, and their dust am I which has vanished. I am their strivings; and their death-agonies am I. Behold, I show you a mystery within a mystery. The anguish and the dust die not, and the suffer-

ing and the victory are not in vain. For, transfigured, I pass, and the drama of Being is ended and the Tragic Doom is fulfilled."

"What, in plain prose, is the final impression left on the mind by this extraordinary work?" says Axel Petersen in the critique already quoted. "What is the dramatist's message? What at last is the unifying idea of this play, astonishing the mind by its myriad-sided suggestiveness, here startling us by a trait drawn from the Zend Avesta or the remoter, more mysterious East, there by a phrase that upcalls the lost religion of Mithras or the better-known faiths of Judæa, Persia, Egypt, Babylonia, Hellas? Amid all this dazzling, knowledge-steeped variousness of ideas and rich and tapestried imaginings, one purpose shines—to give God a newer voice and to give man a newer vision. And I, for one, welcome the poet-mystic's daring, and praise his high endeavour; for—and here I speak not for myself only but for many in Vienna and for many in Germany—it is not new governments, but a new vision of God that this age is now waiting for. Our hearts are sick of dreams and the irrealizable promises of revolutions; sick too of the refurbishing of old institutions and the promulgation of new laws. Prometheus in this tragedy realizes these to the utmost; earth and this universe under his brief dominion leave no Utopian vision and utilitarian hope unfulfilled. And what at its height is his prayer and the prayer of the worlds? It is for the earthquake-rent Caucasus. It is for the lightnings of his God-adversary. To what end has he raised existence to its height, unless that out of the ecstasy of Being the darker, mightier ecstasy of Annihiliation may arise?"

CHAPTER VII

A VIENNESE SUPPER PARTY

I

SHORTLY before ten o'clock Rentzdorf, unable any longer to control his impatience to see his mistress, quitting the Opera, called a hackney coach.

As he was about to enter it he involuntarily glanced at the driver.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Caspar? Is it Caspar?"

"Yes, sir, it is Caspar Karstens."

Rentzdorf looked with stupefaction at the man and then at the horse. Its wretched leanness pierced even the unclipped coat, thick as a fur. The harness was patched, tied in places with string, and everywhere rusty and worn. Yet before the war this man was one of the smartest drivers in Vienna.

But there was nothing to be said, and both men knew it. It was war.

"To the Rothenthurm, sir?"

"No; the Palazzo Esterthal."

As they trotted through the narrow streets, here lighted with oil lamps, there dark, silent, and deserted, a watchman passed, chanting his refrain—

"Höret was ich euch will sagen,
Die Glock' hat zehn geschlagen."

The melancholy sound, heard in childhood, heard in youth and early manhood, affected Rentzdorf singularly. His mind had for months been accustomed to the bivouac silences or turmoil, punctuated at intervals by bugle calls or the distant movement of troops.

They were now skirting the broad park which lay to the east of the Hofburg. His thoughts concentrated in sudden violent passion on his mistress. Distinct as Artemis bathing on a moonlit night in Thessaly, her figure burned there before him in pallid, unearthly splendour. It was on such a night and within those very walls of the old palace of the Habsburgs that he had first met her—three years and a half ago.

It was in 1806. A series of brilliant festivities celebrated the new title of "Emperor of Austria" which, forestalling Napoleon's design, Francis II. had assumed. The disasters of Ulm and Austerlitz seemed already forgotten. Vienna had recovered her gaiety and her magnificence. Strellein, the equerry to the Empress Ludovica, had revived those quadrilles on horseback which, a generation earlier, Maria Theresa had made fashionable. Like the other fêtes invented by that great sovereign, those quadrilles were adapted to her own tastes and to her own handsome person, and they had not outlived her ten years. Their revival by a foreign princess pleased the Viennese. It gave the gazettes the opportunity of recalling Austria's victories over Frederick and Prussia's measureless rapacity.

It was on a June night, sultry and still, that Rentzdorf first saw one of these dances. At Mohacz he had finished an act of his *Prometheus*, and, in singular exaltation, he had come to Vienna to see Johann and Bolli.

His surprise when, in the Rittersaal, he saw the horsewomen arrange themselves for the quadrille, had in a moment become interest, then delight—the flare of the torches, the music, the rhythmic beat of the hoofs, the youth and grace of the riders; and, as the dance proceeded, his delight

had become a fixed dream through which devolved the images of life's extremes of beauty and of daring, of woman's beauty and of war; and, every faculty alit, he saw or seemed to see actualized the very shapes which in the woods at Mohacz he had been brooding—the frieze of the Parthenon, the temple decorated by Scopas, the forms of tragic myth and drama. And it was whilst he stood there, bound by the triple spell of music, woman's grace, and visionary thought, that, still in this trance-like state, his blood rushed out like fire towards one of the riders; and in that passage of time, most like a dream, a passion began in Rentzdorf's spirit which swept into itself every faculty—the senses' thrill, the imagination's glory, the will's energy, the intellect's soaring scrutiny.

Love may or may not arise at first sight; but in the relations of a man to a woman the transition from friendship, however intimate, to passion, however incipient, is abrupt and well-defined. Friendship, love, passion—Rentzdorf experienced all for that unknown horsewoman during the brief space that the dance lasted.

The riders that night were in three groups, fifteen ladies in all, drawn from the foremost families of Vienna and Presburg. Five dressed in pale pink rode grey horses, five in light blue rode black horses, and five in white or ivory silk rode horses of a deep bay or roan colour.

When in a figure of the dance her horse reared dangerously, her eyes under her short veil flashed a smile to Johann and Toc, beside whom Rentzdorf was standing. Mastering her horse, she instantly took her place in the stepping, curvetting, circling throng. A mist of music environed her. That was the moment in which friendship became passion. It was in that moment also that he saw that she was in white, riding a bay.

The act, swift as lighting, by which she had mastered the bay had strung her figure to the utmost, outlining every

contour from stirrup to knee, from hips to shoulders and wrists. Not in his dreams nor in creative ecstasy of poetry had Rentzdorf seen a shape more fair.

"Three and a half years ago and a June midnight. . . . It was yesterday."

The vision had disappeared. He heard the clatter of his hackney's hoofs. Around him the darkness of Vienna streets, and in front there loomed the grim outline of the Mölker bastion and the Mölker Thor.

II

The supper-room of the Palazzo Esterthal was, like the other apartments, furnished in a style of sombre and faded magnificence—candelabra and massive ornaments in bronze, deep crimson hangings in damask, whilst the panelling, tables, and chairs were of the dark woods familiar in the courts of Naples and Madrid. Even the modern paintings, including one of Amalie herself and one of her husband wearing the uniform of Ferdinand IV.'s Guard, both executed at Naples by a follower of Ribera, were in the Spanish style.

Rentzdorf reached the palace at about half-past ten. In the hall, as was the custom in Vienna, he gave his sword to a servant before entering the supper-room.

The company, amounting still to some fifty or sixty persons, was more numerous than he had expected. At a glance he took in its character; diplomatists, secretaries, a minister, and other representatives of various State departments and their satellites. Except the old Count and two generals of Joseph II.'s period, not a soldier was present.

Such a company in Amalie's house would have bored Rentzdorf at any time; to-night it was exasperating to excess.

"To see her, to be near her," thought he, "bored even with her boredoms!"

It was not the rose, but it was at least the rose's shadow.

Rentzdorf walked straight towards Amalie, forcing a dignitary who was about to kiss her hand to step aside with a bland, unfriendly smile.

This was Minister von Stiegerling, who in his civic capacity had been permitted to remain in Vienna. There was, the wits alleged, an additional reason. Napoleon delighted to honour the man to whom he owed the glories of Ulm and Austerlitz; for Stiegerling it was who, in October, 1805, had persuaded the shifty Francis II. to make his quarter-master Mack commander-in-chief, and it was Stiegerling whose corruption or incapacity was responsible for the condition of the army in that fatal year—not a battery with its equipment of horses, not a regiment or squadron which had more than two-fifths of its officers with the colours. Disgraced by Stadion, this man had, in February, 1808, recovered his prestige, and now, it was rumoured, his was the secret force behind the sinister and rapid advance of Metternich.

Rentzdorf had always regarded Stiegerling with mistrust and contempt. To-night he answered his false compliments with cold ceremoniousness; but the minister, lifting up his powerful frame and large face simmering with fat, turned again to Amalie, though still addressing Rentzdorf, and said in his authoritative but curious tenor voice:

"You will permit me, sir, to finish what I was saying to her Illustriousness? For I was observing that what our gracious Emperor desires is not men imbued with new ideas and subversionary theories, but men faithful to the traditions which in the past have made Austria glorious, and, in the future, shall keep her great. In a word," he said, dropping suddenly into his famous "homely" manner, "what Francis II. wants in his subjects are simple loyal hearts. Mushroom empires depend for their prestige on newfangled titles and dignities. Austria is old——"

A sound that was like a groan of ironic assent interrupted

the reed-like voice. Rentzdorf, glancing in the direction of the sound, saw Count Johann, Alexis Rasumowski and Max Dietrich, Lan-Lan's brother, with a bevy of ladies standing under a full-length portrait of the Archduke Maximilian. All were gazing, with eyes brimming with laughter or scorn, straight across at Stiegerling.

"It is a company of the Bianchi defying the Neri," Amalie said laughingly to Rentzdorf. "And you, Herr von Stiegerling, you are a finished Corso Donati."

"Madame," was the answer, "you doubtless praise me beyond my poor merits; but I am unversed in Florentine history." And, unperturbed, he continued: "Such, I say, are the men that our good sovereign needs—not the so-called men of ideas, and *frondeurs*," he interjected, with an adder-like glance from between the black narrow slits of his heavy-lidded eyes in the direction of Count Johann.

And with an unctuous smile he again took Amalie's hand, and cited for the hundredth time the courage of the Cistercian monk who at Wagram had carried the sacred wafers in a pyx from one death-haunted spot to another of the battlefield, administering them to the wounded of both armies.

He then bowed deeply, and, with a viperish smile to Rentzdorf, he very slowly quitted the room, turning at the door to give some instructions to his under-secretary, Gerlach, a studious-looking personage in spectacles, with dirty-ish grey hair and a thin, unhealthy beard, who at one time had been a professor at Jena. For Stiegerling was a man of culture; year by year on the 9th of May he sent a wreath to Schiller's grave; he had devised in 1807 the visit of August von Schlegel to Vienna. He had even hoped at one time to induce Kant to quit Königsberg for the Austrian capital.

The pressure around Amalie increased; and Rentzdorf was turning away when immediately on his left he encountered a slim figure in white, tall, with a pale face, sparkling

eyes, clustering brown curls, and a voice that trembled a little.

"Nusschen?" he said questioningly.

Since he had left Vienna the girl had become a woman.

"Yes, it is Nusschen," came a laughing answer; and Toc stood beside her, the two confronting him. "Will you dance with us to-night?"

But a masterful hand was laid on Rentzdorf's arm.

"I must rescue you from these sirens," said Johann. "You must in any case have something to eat. Even poets cannot live on your blandishments only," he said to the two women.

And sitting down with Rentzdorf at some distance he poured out his wine, taking it from a servant in the Esterthal livery.

"Why did you come to this house?" he asked in an undertone. "That parasite of Stiegerling's is just the fellow to pass the word."

Rentzdorf's dark penetrating eyes rested for a moment on Count Johann's.

"There is no danger. I cannot be arrested without an order from Bonaparte, and, by morning, unless this peace is signed, I shall be on my way to Buda again."

He spoke in the same low tones as Count Johann; but the latter, feeling himself observed, said aloud: "You heard Stiegerling the Magnificent? It is an insult to the Florentine to call those piteous ineptitudes Machiavellian; is it not so, your Excellency?"

He turned abruptly and faced the man whose shadow he had felt approaching.

It was the noted jurist, Theodor Maas, an Aulic Councillor. His squat, bristly fingers had several rings on them. Though not fifty, his dry, shrewd, clean-shaven face was already covered with countless thread-like wrinkles that ran in circles across his brow and down his cheeks where,

on either side of his long nose and thin irregular lips, they met the wrinkles of his chin, and whenever he spoke every wrinkle darted and moved till the whole face shook. He spoke habitually in rasping, husky, but very deliberate tones, and now, ignoring Count Johann's remark and greeting Rentzdorf with a vinegary effusiveness, he asked shrilly:

"Anything more known of that queer affair at Schönbrunn? What? Nothing? Not even at the embassy?"

"No," Count Johann said curtly; and to Rentzdorf he added, "Maas knows more secrets than any man in Vienna, yet he is always in search of news."

The councillor grinned complacently, and with a grotesque affectation of frankness, said to Johann:

"Now who will tell me why everything in Austria is done in this hugger-mugger fashion? Nobody knows whether we are at peace or war, whether our good Emperor is withholding from his children a pleasant surprise until he can announce it in person in our streets, or whether Bonaparte, to save appearances, desires to leave Schönbrunn before his humiliation is known. For example, this evening in the Leopoldstadt I heard——"

"Away with Stadion! The will of Metternich is the will of God," interjected the same mocking voice that had interrupted Stiegerling.

"Ah, ah!" exclaimed Maas, bringing the stubby forefinger of his right hand vertically down upon the palm of his left, and he seemed about to say something murderous; but changing his intention, he strutted from the spot.

Count Johann was the outspoken enemy of the Metternich faction, and he had been the first to satirize Gentz's fatuous proposal of a new capital. He had denounced not less indignantly the Metternich policy of a censored theatre, a gagged press, universal espionage, and the fortress or the dungeon as the only political arguments worthy of a strong government.

"Our good Emperor," he said, when the Aulic Councillor was out of hearing, "is withholding from his children not a pleasant surprise but another damnable surrender. Two such crows as Maas and Stiegerling would not have croaked in tune unless they had scented the corpse of Austria's honour. My bluff was nearer the mark than I knew. We may know before midnight. But yonder Toc and Nusschen are making signals of distress. Finish your supper, and I will bring them to you. The crowd is dispersing."

In a second or two the Countess Markowitz took the seat vacated by her brother-in-law.

Rentzdorf turned to her gladly.

The Countess, though a motherly woman, was "literary" and of advanced tastes, and in her Thursday reunions her circle regularly discussed *Prometheus* and the *Essays*—but they discussed also Werner's *Templars* and Kotzebue's *Incas*. She was a Saxon, and though bearing one of the greatest names in Austria had the pretension to look down upon Vienna from the heights of Dresden æstheticism. To-night this idiosyncrasy appeared almost immediately.

"Does not Daruka," she said, "add just the touch of barbaric sumptuousness that one instinctively seeks in a Vienna salon? This is the fifth dress she has worn to-day, each gorgeous as this. Nobody has a chance of looking anything else but dowdy."

Rentzdorf looked in the direction indicated by the Countess. The dress of Daruka, Princess Ternitchsky, was certainly "barbaric," but splendid—a blood-red tunic embroidered in black and gold above a white satin skirt draped with black lace terminating in a heavy gold fringe; a green sash, also embroidered and fringed, was knotted about her waist, and on her left arm a silver serpent spotted with opals and with eyes of topaz and jet coiled itself, whilst into her hair, which was black and abundant, two long ropes of pearls had been twisted, resembling at a distance luminous

spots of milk thickly sprinkled upon ebony. This was the Circassian alluded to by Amalie in her talk with Toc that morning. Prince Ternitchsky, her husband, was said by some to have bought her as a slave in Tiflis; by others, to have won her at the gaming-table, her father, a Circassian chief, having, after excessive losses, staked first his slaves, then his homestead, then his wife, and last his daughter. But the tribe by the threats of death or mutilation had compelled Ternitchsky to marry her. Vienna had at first refused to receive her; but a duel or two had imposed respect or silence on his friends and Daruka's "savage" naïveté and goodness of heart established her position. From being refused she became the fashion. Her outlandish pronunciation of the Viennese dialect, her quaint idioms, her appetite for sweetmeats, her delight in stories of primitive revenge, especially stories of unfaithful women punished by devilish tortures—eyes torn out, fingers and toes amputated joint by joint—became the rage.

But at that moment Fritz Wollmoden, a nephew of the plenipotentiary, came forward to introduce to the Countess Markowitz his newly married wife, a Saxon also, round-featured, but bursting with youth and health, and lightly clad as a mountain nymph. Toc and Nusschen meantime had fallen into the clutches of Alexis Rasumowski and Count Johann was powerless to rescue them.

Rentzdorf was for some minutes left undisturbed. He rose and was about to move to another part of the room, but he sat down again, letting his eyes pass from the faces around to the portraits of the Spanish school on the walls, pausing in troubled fixity on that of Amalie. It showed her as a girl of seventeen, a figure of youthful, upspringing grace in a simple black mantilla; yet no one could look on the picture and not ask—Who is she? To be kissed by those lips—has earth or heaven any more entrancing dream? But Rentzdorf had the curse, if also the reward, of

imagination; he could never see this picture without also conjuring up her life in Naples as Esterthal's bride—the licentious court, the theatres, the Cytherean dances, the moonlight parties on the bay.

From the portrait Rentzdorf looked to Amalie herself. She was standing with her back to him, but with her face in profile; for, a second before, she had made a quick movement to answer an importunate guest—a movement which dragged the pale and lustrous softness of her dress into myriad folds about her waist and knees.

"God!" he muttered involuntarily, "how beautiful!"

He felt the blood congest his temples, then an icy tremor crept over him; morbidly oppressed in the magic of her beauty there was something demonic and malign.

"And yet the thoughts I have thought from woman are the only thoughts that God has thought. The things I have felt from woman are the only things that God has felt."

Yes, he told himself, he knew in his mistress to-night the seduction as well as the terror; he knew the true nature of the forces latent in woman's soul and in woman's body—the resources of nature garnered there, fulfilling the world-soul's plan, stronger than lightning because they are born of the lightning, or than war. What shall resist them?

Twice in his life he had experienced war in its most daunting and harrowing shape; he had seen the frozen hillsides and valleys of Austerlitz, and the wheat-fields of Wagram in which, as evening fell, not the corncrake's call, but the maledictions of tortured men made frightful the twilight. He had heard on the *puszta* or sun-baked steppes of Hungary the thunder making of the elements a mimicry of devastation and war. But in the breathing calm of that woman's figure he divined forces dread and sublime as the elemental forces of tempest and revolution; for in her loveliness, pale and erect, was the very end, the goal, whither

across aeons of terror and elemental fury nature had striven.

III

It was eleven o'clock, but some twenty people were still present.

The departure of the Ternitchskys had been followed by the inevitable chatter about that interesting ménage. Was it true that in Rome Prince Ternitchsky, to save the life of the enamoured Canova, had "lent" Daruka to the sculptor, exactly as Alexander had "lent" Campaspe to Appeles?

"Where does Daruka get those perfumes?" Madame Wollmoden asked in her fresh girlish voice, fanning herself aggressively. "It makes my head ache to be near her."

"We shall teach you those mysteries in Vienna," Countess Markowitz said indulgently. "I too had headaches when I first came from Dresden."

Max Dietrich narrated Daruka's retort to Radetsky at a boar hunt, and her naïve impressions of Bonaparte—"Dat your world-conqueror? Dat little toad? You should see my father." The words had become a caricature, then a joyous song.

Young Wollmoden, anxious to distinguish himself, intervened. "They say at Rome that Bonaparte's mother exhibits herself to British tourists for three gulden a head."

"Bonaparte's mother?" Rasumowski murmured to a lady with a sleepy voice displaying a well-fleshed forearm by doubling back her elbow. "If it were his sister Pauline——"

Count Johann, unable to master his anger, said with harsh deriding emphasis, "Our motherland exhibits her dotage to all Europe. Who pays her?"

He rose, and as he parted with Rentzdorf said in the same voice.

"This is Vienna in a nutshell. You know it again?"

"I shall see you later?" Rentzdorf asked.

"At the Rittersaal? Yes."

The talk streamed on, gossip and anecdote, anecdote and gossip.

"Bonaparte himself, I am told, bores women," the lady with the drowsy voice remarked.

"No wonder," Rasumowski retorted quickly; "he buries so many men." And overjoyed at his own *mot*, he repeated it, stressing the innuendo.

His yellowish brown complexion, broad face, wide-set eyes, shining like the back of a beetle, revealed the Tartar peasant original of his house; but his infectious good-humour was irresistible, and Rentzdorf laughed right out when Rasumowski, determined not to be ignored by the poet, said straight to him——

"What is it like to be under grape-shot for thirty-five minutes, eh?" (Rentzdorf's regiment had had to face this ordeal at Eckmühl.) "Is it as bad as a thunderstorm? We had an awful one in Vienna the night before Wagram. It lasted seven hours. I slept through it all, but nobody made me a general for my coolness. Hard, I call it, eh? It's always the way in Austria. Intrepidity is unrecognized except in the ranks of our enemies. See? Eh?"

But Toc now turned with decision to Rentzdorf.

"Sit here," she said, pointing to a canapé, "and talk to Nusschen and me. You have not said a word to us yet. And yonder comes Amalie!"

Toc's eyes were radiant; her cheeks flushed. Rentzdorf had noticed that she appeared to have an understanding with Count Johann. Was it marriage at last?

At a distance the rumbling bass voice of Count Markowitz was heard intoning.

"That which makes a great strategist," he was saying, "is not courage; it is the power to form decision after decision amid the firing of guns and muskets, amid the cries of mortally wounded men and horses, and to make those de-

cisions securely and collectedly as a mathematician seated before a problem in his study. The Archduke Charles ——"

IV

A quarter of an hour later Count Estherthal was sitting at the foot of the chief table fast asleep. Markowitz's rumbling voice and somnolent aphorisms had produced this effect. The old Count had, with stubborn courtesy, resisted the drowsiness invading him; he had closed first the right eye, then the left, in the hope of relieving the strain but the platitudes unwound themselves endlessly, and he had at last closed both eyes simultaneously, and, to Toc's infinite amusement, fallen fast asleep.

"Now we can escape," she whispered to Nusschen, and taking the girl's arm she slipped behind Markowitz's chair, noting with comic dismay the resemblance of his square shoulders to his brother Johann's, and said to him with gravity——

"Padrino needs rest. He has to act as Amalie's escort later."

Count Markowitz rose reluctantly and was followed by the three or four other guests who still lingered.

Toc's manœuvre left Rentzdorf and Amalie to themselves. The latter got up and put out the candles nearest to them, thus surrounding their end of the table with a zone of obscurity.

"Now we are alone. Dearest, dearest. . . ."

Rentzdorf did not answer. A remark of Toc's had discovered to him that Count Ferdinand, Amalie's husband, had, less than six weeks ago, passed a fortnight in Vienna and in this house. Amalie at the time was writing to him every second day; but of her husband's visit she had said not a word. Why? He had striven to throttle the foul suspicion, but it had returned and re-returned, and now, fanned by a tyrannous imagination, possessed him utterly.

An hour ago there was not on earth a more radiant glory than the glory which environed his life; now a pit in Malebolge was not more loathesome and dark. An abominable toast given at a mess after the campaign kept rattling in his brain—"To the husbands of our fair ones in Vienna! May they enjoy the repose our fatigues have granted them." "To the husbands of our fair ones!" a voice had shouted in drunken hilarity. "They have a better time than we lovers ever imagine. Crede experto."

"To-night, to-night!" Rentzdorf muttered to himself in desperate misery. "Oh, the irony of it. . . . To-night!"

And yet, he asked himself in an outburst of cynicism, what was it that he had expected in Vienna, and what was it that he had found? One of the most beautiful women in Austria sat waiting for him to make love to her. What more could the heart of man desire? True, five weeks ago this lady had received her husband under this roof and into her bed. What was more natural? True again, it proved that for three years she had day by day been lying to him. Again, what was more natural? All women are liars. It is a commonplace. There was not a man or woman of the court circle in Vienna or Naples who would not have stood aghast with indignation or derision that he should in such a mistress have expected any other conduct.

And murder, the authentic blood-lust, was on him. The torrent of insults which in crimes of jealousy are the prelude to violence was suffocating him.

Suddenly he burst into words—"Is it not singular? This earth and all modern life are gangrened with falsehood; but in Vienna no one lies. Society is infamy's sojourn, but in Vienna there are only pure women and brave men—not a single liar anywhere. You and I, Amalie, liars both; how can we live in such a city of righteousness, and how can we look in each other's eyes and see the lies curling and engendering there?"

It did not seem his own judgment that framed nor his own voice that spoke the hideous words, but the judgment and the voice from the Irene Apponyi period.

But seeing the misery in her lover's eyes, hearing it in his voice, Amalie was resolved to be very patient.

"If I were the thing you suspect, Heinrich," she said, forcing down her emotion, "could I have met you thus to-night? Or if I imagined you *believed* in your own suspicions, do you suppose I should sit here a second longer? False to everyone else, these three years—to you, to you alone I have never spoken a word save the truth. Why should I begin to lie to you to-night?"

And in a gentler voice she continued——

"If I did not tell you myself, it was because in my happiness I had forgotten. I wished to write to you at the time; but even in a cipher how was I to risk betraying him? His life might have paid for my rashness. There was daily a talk of war. I was distracted by my own anxiety."

"Why did he run that risk?" Rentzdorf broke in. "For what and for whom?"

Amalie looked at her lover.

"Not for me," she answered in tones through which there shot a gleam of laughter. Yet the next instant she was trembling and a vivid blush swept over her pale cheeks.

"It was for Adelheid Ortski," she said in a low constrained voice.

Even now Amalie von Esterthal could not speak the name of her husband's mistress, simply, as she would have spoken another woman's name.

Dumbfounded, Rentzdorf sprang to his feet. It was not difficult for him to divine the humiliation it must have cost her to speak these words.

"Chichitza?" he exclaimed involuntarily. "Where was my Lord Paget?"

She made a vague gesture.

"At Troppau, trying, in prospect of a renewal of the war, to arrange a rapprochement between England and Prussia. Chichitza's own indiscretion had brought her into danger. You had not heard?"

"I have heard nothing."

She told him in a rapid imperfect manner the exploit against Napoleon of which Lord Paget's mistress had been the heroine; the theatrical purchase of a dagger in the Graben, "destined for the tyrant's heart," and of Bonaparte's famous comment, "The lady confounds the parts of Judith and Rahab."

Rentzdorf listened like a man who issues from a cavern full of the uncouth shapes of darkness and the hovering of obscene wings and suddenly stands under the sun-steeped azure and sees around and in front of him the sands and the myriad-twinkling waters of the sea. But even whilst joy struggled with remorse in his heart, his imagination had swept on to the root cause of to-night's painful scene, and of the mutual uneasiness or suspicion which had disfigured other days and other nights. It was their sundered lives—he living in his rooms, she in this palace as Esterthal's wife, compelled on state occasions to preside at his table, her goings out and her comings in, her daily actions, the very dresses she wore, exposed to his arbitrament. This too added a morbid element to the misery of each parting, deep enough in itself. For all this there was one remedy—to leave Vienna together! And in the vortex of their great passion, greeting the sun each day together, what a glory transcending glory awaited them!

He turned to her. His words of adoration and the pictures of their love-life together which her own imagination conjured overwhelmed her.

She sat with bent head.

"Heinrich! You hurt me. To-night! How I have waited for to-night, and now it harrows my very soul. . . .

To be together? Ah God, as if you did not know my heart's cry. I lie down at night. I never sleep till in imagination you take me into your arms. Never a morning I wake but I wish you beside me, long for you, stretch out my arms for you with a delicious horrible craving. For ever, for ever. But that is the heaven which you and I shall never reach."

She broke off with a cry of abrupt stifled anguish. Then, more calm, she resumed—"For how is it to be done? I ask myself this a thousand times; but there is never an answer. Besides, if you cannot trust me now, how could you trust me then? Would marriage keep me faithful?"

It was a flash of resentment; it was a flash also of the disconcerting candour and humour which marked Amalie von Esterthal—the candour, for instance, which had edged her replies to Toc that morning. Suddenly the resentment vanished and her voice became dolorous in its appeal as the slow dropping of tears. It was vain, she pointed out, for Rentzdorf and her to speak of marriage. To them that was for ever denied. Her husband had all the superstitions as well as the courage of his caste. He was cruel, profligate, treacherous, and proud; but in his religion bigoted as a Dominican or a Carthusian friar.

"To go away together," she concluded, "that is not for us. We may die together—Ah!" she said with a sudden inspiration, "it came to us a year ago. In the Spõrelberg—do you remember? If we had but obeyed, if we had but taken that path then——"

Her voice had sunk to a whisper.

And suddenly in thought Rentzdorf was standing beside her on a ledge amongst the tormented basalt crags of the Spõrelberg. The last hour of their last afternoon together had come, for there in a châlet in the Styrian Alps they had passed three weeks in a continuous bliss which seemed less like that of mistress and mortal lover than that of spirits in

ecstasy. Together they had lived Rentzdorf's faith; they had lived the vision of his *Prometheus*, day transcending successive day; but that afternoon, confronted with the return, he to the army, she to the social routine of Vienna, a reaction and an immense sadness possessed them.

"Life's meaning? God's meaning?" Rentzdorf had said in vehement gloom. "Nor life nor God has any meaning save this; Fame, *la gloire*, we can leave to Bonaparte; and yet, you and I, if all this instant were to end, would not be forgotten utterly. Earth would remember us; earth in her deep centre would remember us, Amalie, for the things that you and I have felt together and the thoughts that you and I have thought together."

Startled, she had stood for some seconds with down-bent head and with intent face, as though listening to some inward summoner.

"Yes," she had answered at length, "if it were to end now? And why should it not end now?"

In an instant the death-impulse was on both. Speechless yet panting, as in some fearful conflict in their sleep they clung together, each terrorstruck for the other's safety, yet each in desire seeking the other's destruction. The odours of her hair and of her neck maddened him by their seduction; he clasped her closer to his breast, and thus they stood on the dizzy edge. Uncounted fathoms below them, a thread of falling azure, raved the torrent of the Aar.

The crisis had not lasted many minutes, perhaps not even seconds; but every detail of that wide landscape had particularized itself upon their memories—upon hers, a piece of schist about two inches from the brink, that seemed to crackle in the sun, and far below a lake that looked no bigger than a tent-roof; upon his, the chaos of tumbled rocks and mountain summits and overhead the lazy hovering of a vulture on the watch. Not a quarter of an hour ago he had laughed her into "for peace' sake," the assertion that she

saw that same vulture; for her eyes, despite their dark and luminous beauty, were short-sighted.

"Is it for us," he had thought, "that this sentinel vulture waits, he and his invisible companions?"

And, agonized, he had struggled to see her face, that was to be the vulture's prey. But surprised, blind, struggling, she had resisted. In her the death-desire raged on; and, to his horror, he had felt it again on himself once more. To the seduction of the precipice was added the seduction of her embrace; her entwining arms dragged him to the edge; her lips, ice and fire, clung to his; and to his single cry,—her name "Amalie?" she had whispered the answer—"It is now, beloved. Death; it is now."

Her voice in the ecstasy of that death yearning had been her voice in the ecstasy of love yearning.

Five heart-beats this lasted; the next, as though some noxious vapour infecting his brain had dissolved, he wrenched her back from within a foot of the edge, and mortally pale, stood beside her, noting even then the fixed flush on her brow, the surprise and angry darkness in her eyes.

"Reaction from passion's excess, or this vision's exultancy," Rentzdorf reflected, "she had willed death that afternoon, there on the ledge of the Spörelberg. To-night in Vienna, here in this palace, she wills it again. But that other way—why does she not will that other way? Ah, my God, do I myself will it? Do I myself will it? Or is all this but one of the shifting masks that the ultimate anguish in things wears to-night?"

V

The tenderest or the most passionate love never brings a man and a woman nearer than two streams each of which between its own banks seeks by its own path the sea.

Rentzdorf and Amalie von Esterthal were sincere; yet to-night neither had spoken all the truth to each other. She, on her side, left unexpressed a throng of half-unconscious wishes or fears—the wish to retain her rank, and, above all, her personal independence. The right to visit and be visited by "the world" she despised because she possessed that right—it was an encumbrance and a bore, but she feared lest, if she lost it, its value should assume giant proportions. Then there was padrino. She liked him in himself, the stubborn unyielding representative of a caste. She liked him also for his chivalrous cult for her dead mother. Tacitly too she dreaded lest, if they fled together, her lover should weary of a bond which, in its exacting violence, is more testing than marriage. On the other hand she experienced, in bad moments, the married woman's distressing jealousy of the unmarried lover. This very night Nusschen's girlish enthusiasm for Rentzdorf had surprised, pleased, then disturbed her. Rentzdorf, on his side, equally dissimulated the inmost sources of his impatience or his misery. He idolized her with a passion too extreme or not extreme enough.

"For that is the passion consummate," he told himself savagely, "when the delights of the woman we love, even if they ought to be our Hell, are our Heaven. But that is the impossible, that is the unseizable."

He turned to her, mastered by a fiercer yearning, the life yearning, the death yearning. All the suppressed passion of the day scorched in his blood. Never had the beauty of her person been more enthralling. The earth her body pressed would have turned to roses in his lips.

"Amalie!"

But she sprang back.

"Hush!" she whispered. "Be careful."

He followed her glance to the distant table where the old Count still sat. He had stirred in his sleep.

"Padrino?" Amalie called out softly. "Padrino?"

There was no answer. The quiet breathing continued. The sleeper's posture had not changed. He sat with drooping head, his chin on his breast, his hands laid along the arms of his chair. The sleeping figure of the old warrior and diplomat affected Rentzdorf. It had the pathos of all helpless suffering things; but something in the patrician features suggested his son, Amalie's husband, and the spell was broken.

His mistress had risen.

Laying her finger on her lips, she glided to a curtained recess which opened out of this room. This recess or room, which looked on the cedar avenue, was richly furnished, but in a more modern taste. On state occasions, when the Archduke dined with Count Ferdinand, the curtains were removed and the host and his imperial guest, and perhaps two other guests of princely rank, sat here together, separated from yet one with the company in the supper room. It was the Habsburg tradition. Charles V. at Innsbruck had often sat thus with Titian.

Rentzdorf sprang forward to where she waited, a glittering sorcery with her white arm outstretched, holding back the curtain.

Twilight shrouded the recess. Through the window on the right they could see the cedars and the steep gloom of the night sky. Amalie drew her lover to a sofa that stood under a fresco in Guido's manner on the further wall.

"Our voices will not disturb him here. Beloved, my beloved. . . ."

He shuddered at her caress. The passion in her blood shot like a fluid magnetism tingling into his own.

"We will talk of the future to-morrow," she whispered. "To-morrow I will give you my answer. To-night—oh let me kiss you."

He drew her to his breast.

"I am answered already, Amalie. There is neither past nor future. This is the everlasting Now of God's desire and God's dream, in you, in me. The rest is nothingness."

"Dearest, dearest," she murmured, looking up at him. "What hours we have lost—days and weeks and months torn from us; and if we had them all that all would be so little. It has been like death. This morning for the first time I saw the autumn woods. And look at my hands; I have forgotten to care for them or for anything."

He kissed her finger tips one by one, lingering over the exquisitely set nails. He kissed her wrists; he kissed her arms to the hollow of the elbows.

"Beloved," she said, "oh, my beloved, this is very heaven of heaven, merely to breathe, merely to feel your touch; but when you are not there I am no better than the sea-shell that lies on the shore and waits for the tide to fill all its winding and secret recesses. I am the shell; your coming is the tide. . . ."

He interrupted her.

"No, no; let me speak," she pleaded. "When you are not with me I have neither thoughts to utter nor feelings to cry out, except suffering and ennui. Do you remember that night at Semmering in the gardens?"

She alluded to one of those assignations when to their rapt thought time was interrupted, and together they felt the river of the worlds sweep through their trances. But the river was God; and the sea towards which it hastened was Being's annihilation. Her words were the utterance of a woman's passions, but they were also the enfevered gratitude of a woman driven desperate by scepticism to her deliverer, to the poet-visionary who had revealed to her a new God—a God in herself as in the worlds.

Her words, her accent, her burning caresses, were a transport unendurable. This woman who bent over him, intoxicating him by the mist of odours from her hair, her

shoulders, her total person, this was no longer woman, but a diviner, more ethereal substance, assuaging the world-soul's thirst raging in his blood. Beauty herself in all its radiance supernal was at this moment unmasked to his senses and to his soul.

VI

A heavy sound broke in on their bliss-steeped dream. It was like the fall of armour. Both started to their feet and stood listening.

The sound was not repeated.

"It is nothing," Amalie said. "A servant closing a door."

She drew him to her side again.

"Ah," she said hoarsely, "it was *death*, that moment; living God's death, dying God's life. . . ."

Her eyes smouldered. She locked and unlocked her fingers into his.

"I cannot let you go," she said again. "My whole being thrills to you; every fibre aches for you. I cannot let you go; every vein tingles for you. I cannot let you go. O God, Heinrich, Heinrich. . . ."

She flung herself down in prostrate abandonment. She lay thus for many seconds. Then a frightful weeping convulsed her. It was the everlasting parting. He knew it; and in his own sombre brooding her grief was his—God's anguish for the beauty which He forever creates and forever destroys.

"It must be past midnight," he said at length. "When ought you to be at the Rittersaal?"

His own emotion pierced through the quiet words. He looked at the beautiful woman in self-abandoning grief and passion; but in such intervals the soul which is most prostrate is the most exalted, highest, holiest.

"I need not go at all."

There was a feverous energy in her voice, on her brow, in her eyes—the working of restless thought scheming the prolongation of this spiritual anguish and bliss.

"Listen," she said eagerly, and she raised her head; but, at the sight of his face, with a happy tormented sighing she pressed her mouth repeatedly to his, speaking amid kisses as amid falling roses. "There is a way. Yes; yes. For at least two hours I need not be at the Rittersaal. The ball will go on till five. Listen. Go into the hall, put on your sword, and send Schwartz to order the carriage for one or half past one. Then go to my room as though to fetch my domino; but, by accident, leave your sword in my room. You will then say good-night to padrino and to me; and, closing the hall door loudly, go back to my room and wait there."

She sprang to her feet.

"You wonder!" he muttered. But on her account not quite at ease in his mind, he asked. "Who is the servant on duty after midnight?"

"Patzsch's son. Fritz is still with the Landwehr. As for the others. . . ."

A shrug completed her meaning.

The necessity for these precautions was at times humiliating; but, at that period, the caste system, more rigid in Vienna than in any other city of Europe, made a man-servant hardly a man, and a woman a scarce emancipated slave.

"Go!" she entreated. "Go!"

CHAPTER VIII

NAPOLEON'S DREAM

I

IT was past midnight.

Not a breath stirred the trees in the gardens behind Schönbrunn. The palace was in darkness. In front, towards the left, the woods rose in black and winding masses, motionless, profound. In the huge square a fountain flung up the ghostly pallor of its waters, and even that fretful sound, though low, appeared an intrusion in the stupendous silence. The bivouac fires which twinkled at irregular intervals north, east, south, and west, burned fitfully as distant sinking tapers, and, like the fountain, made intenser this impression of the intrusiveness and transitoriness of any motion, of any life.

Universal nature seemed entombed in her own first thought.

Motionlessness, darkness, silence, immensity—and away to the eastward the glimmering flats of the Marchfeld, where, amid the ruins of Austrian villages and homesteads, the dust of those who had fallen at Aspern mingled with the dust of those who, centuries ago, fell with Ottocar and with Rudolf, with Kara Mustapha and Stahrenberg.

Seven or eight guests had dined with Napoleon. The murderous attempt of that morning was by tacit consent ignored. The Emperor was silent and preoccupied. Now

and then, as a mark of regret or reconciliation, he pressed a dish upon the Prince de Neuchâtel. Once the conversation fell on the incidents of the ride and on the encounter with the two Greek priests. Rousing himself, the Emperor condemned the Austrian recruiting system, which, with a blunt astuteness "thoroughly Austrian," tore the blacksmith and the carpenter rather than the ploughman and the labourer from village and town. "And the folly of it! A Blacksmith can till a field or hold a plough but no labourer can at once replace the carpenter at his bench or the blacksmith at his forge." On the other hand, he praised the Austrian soldiers—"the best in the world if they had leaders." Rapp, with a touch of the bluff frankness which had ruined his advancement, observed that the Emperor had already said this of the Russians.

"You are always thinking of the Russians," Napoleon said tartly. "You have never forgotten Austerlitz and the Prince Repnin."

No courier had arrived from Totis. Champagny in Vienna was still closeted with Liechtenstein; and as the evening proceeded the Emperor's uneasiness and irritability increased, and his uneasiness communicated itself to his immediate entourage and in some inscrutable way to the entire household. Men who remembered the infernal machine and the conspiracy of Cadoudal averred that in those days Napoleon had been calmer in a much more trying ordeal.

"Not one of us is the man he was before this accursed campaign," Hulin said that evening to Rapp. "Where is it to end, and how? Every bayonet with a point is beyond the Pyrenees. We have had to fight this entire campaign with the guns. And Spain is Hell. Death, disease or capture is the choice, and always in the end—death." And continuing with a touch of Rousseauism common in the Republican and Napoleonic armies,—"We are hated in

Vienna. Andréossy admits it. And we are hated in Germany, and in Europe. What an unhappy fate for France! Yesterday the Christ of nations; to-day the Judas; yesterday the world's forlorn hope; to-day the world's execration. You are a Frenchman as I am, Rapp. Was it for this the Girondins walked to the Scaffold like hero-martyrs? Was it for this we fought Valmy and Jemappes?"

At about half past eight before setting out for the Schloss Theatre, Napoleon had again sent for Corvisart and for Savary and questioned them separately and in private upon their visits to the young Thuringian.

"I have broached many subjects with him," Corvisart assured the Emperor, "but I can find no grounds for declaring him insane. He seems a lad of unusual culture and earnestness. Upon every subject except one he converses most reasonably."

"And that is?"

"His divine mission to kill yourself, Sire."

Napoleon looked intently at the shrewd grey features of his physician. But again they betrayed nothing.

With Savary the interview had lasted longer.

Rough-mannered to his equals, overbearing or churlishly condescending to his inferiors, taciturn in general society, unable, it was said, to forget even in the most brilliant assembly the haunting eyes of his victims, the Duc de Rovigo was, in his master's presence, invariably awkward, too brusque or too subservient, using, or omitting to use, the words "Sire" and "Majesty" with the maladroitness of a man afraid of being suspected of republicanism, yet determined not to set an example of cringing.

"Does the assassin express no sorrow at leaving his family, his friends, his sweetheart for ever? None for his own fate?" Napoleon had enquired in a detached indifferent tone.

"He repents of nothing, regrets nothing," had been the sullen answer.

"He is young to die."

"He is old in his readiness, Sire."

"Yes, yes. I know these hotheads. A fast will tame his spirit and bring him to his senses. Give him nothing for twenty-four hours."

"Sire, he refuses to eat."

"How? What do you say?"

"Your Majesty, he refuses most constantly, alleging that he has eaten enough before he dies."

"It is a Roman answer," Napoleon exclaimed after some seconds' meditation; and with the word this interview too had terminated. Attended by his suite, the Emperor had then started for the theatre.

The piece, set up by Denon at the last moment, was Zingarelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. Originally, to celebrate the peace that it was confidently expected would be signed that morning, the Emperor had selected his old favourite, *The Triumph of Trajan*, and Luce de Lanival's new piece, *The Death of Hector*, which, though ridiculed as "a headquarters drama," he had himself rewarded, on its first representation ten months ago, by a pension of ten thousand livres. But the protracted negotiations had now made both pieces appear inopportune; and after rejecting all Denon's suggestions Napoleon had at last consented to permit a Piedmontese singer recommended by Eugène Beauharnais, the Viceroy of Italy, to appear before him as Romeo.

When the curtain rose the Emperor had called Berthier's attention to the small number of Viennese present.

"Are they in hiding? Or are they preparing another *coup*, since the Thuringian's has failed?"

"No," the Prince de Neuchâtel had answered. "It is only the changed bill. The Viennese are exigent. They cannot endure a débutant in a familiar piece."

The young tenor, excited by the presence of Napoleon and

his staff, had sung the part as though he were never to sing again. Napoleon, though bored at first and apparently asleep, had gradually begun to listen with a kind of painful attention. Romeo's slim figure recalled Friedrich Staps's; his voice in the duel with Tybalt had the same angry pathos and the same ringing energy; death was in that voice, death yet unconquerable will. The famous lament by the tomb of Juliet, one of Zingarelli's few inspirations, had moved him. Had not a miniature been found on the youthful assassin? Had not he too a mistress?

On his return from the theatre the Emperor had worked for an hour and a half with Ménéval, dictating along with other letters a private despatch, to start before midnight, to Fouché, his minister of Police at Paris. It was the letter in which, after altering the date from the 13th to the 12th October, he insinuates Staps's madness, but in a postscript as well as in the letter itself charges Fouché with the utmost secrecy. An article in the *Moniteur* which gave an account of the parade on the 13th was framed upon the instructions that filled the remainder of the letter. The Emperor in that article was said to be in exceptional health; his long ride was described and his conversation with the two Greek priests narrated at length. The article was in the Duc d'Otrante's best style. It concluded:

"May all Frenchmen take advantage of the wisdom of our gracious sovereign who, amid the dangers of a campaign, has leisure to direct his mighty mind to the tobacco plantations of England and the potato-cultivation of Lower Austria."

If Staps had hoped by the price of his own blood to purchase a glory like that of a Brutus or a Charlotte Corday he would, Napoleon had resolved, be most cruelly undeceived.

One of Napoleon's swiftest couriers had started with this letter at about eleven.

II

Midnight had struck before Napoleon dismissed his secretary and retired.

Alone in his room a reaction, sudden as that which assailed him on the night of Ebersdorf, at once set in, and, shattered as his nerves were by the events of the afternoon, he had the less power to resist the onset. He was irritated and astonished, for on retiring he had had no thought but of sleep. He had been accustomed to treat sleep as if it were one of his aides-de-camp, ready to obey orders; and sleep had been a faithful satellite. On the 6th of July, at the battle of Wagram, Rustum had spread a bearskin on the ground and he had snatched seventeen minutes profound slumber, and risen with a joyous exultancy to give the order for Macdonald's stupendous charge.

"To-night—why the devil cannot I sleep to-night? Ah, Liechtenstein, and no answer from Totis, and it is nine hours since Nicas started."

Instead of undressing, he flung himself down on a sofa and began to think.

"The ambassadors will find me with my boots on," he reflected grimly, and a momentary appeasement swept over him.

The room, decorated in white and gold and pale blue, was, except the adjoining cabinet, the only room in Schönbrunn which had a fireplace. The others were heated with the unsightly stoves universal in Austria. A small table had been placed beside the sofa where Napoleon sat, and at intervals he tapped on it with his fingers, nervously, yet in rhythm, in a kind of tune.

But suddenly he got up, and with his hands behind his back and his head sunk between his powerful shoulders began to walk up and down. He wore the same coat that he had worn in the afternoon, but, instead of the star, the red

ribbon of the Legion of Honour. He seemed lost in thought yet every now and then he stopped and looked at some object in the room, now at a medallion portrait of Maria Theresa, now at a pastoral in the style of Fragonard, now at a portrait of the Duke of Lorraine, Maria Theresa's big, honest, good-natured, stupid consort, and close to it the ironic countenance of Maximilian in Durer's marvellous sketch; now at other pictures, or at other ornaments of elegance or price.

"It is the Tugendbund," he muttered brusquely.

The words expressed the net product of his aimless prowlings about the room. For everything that he had ascertained from Savary or from Corvisart of the young fanatic's history—his birth, his education, his ambitions, and the scenes amid which he had lived—went to confirm this one theory beyond all the others that had hovered before Napoleon's imagination during the interrogatory of that afternoon. It was the Kōnigsberg patriots, not the Jesuits, who this time had placed a dagger in the hands of this youthful Ravaillac.

Always profoundly interested in history and in the effects of the past upon the present, Napoleon had listened attentively amidst his pomp and festivities at Erfurt to the legends and facts of the region around. Thuringia was a coagulated mass of German legend and German sentiment.

"How practical!" he exclaimed, fired into admiration of an enemy. "How possible!"

For here in this Bond of Valour and sentiment of nationality was the authentic antagonist of his own world-policy. He strove to disintegrate nationality where it was strongest in Germany—in Prussia, for instance, in Suabia, in the Rhine country and by the Elbe. The Tugendbund, on the other hand, by its appeals to the heroic past, to Charlemagne and Arminius, to the Ottonides and the Hohenstaufen, to Maximilian, to Luther, even to Wallenstein and to

Frederick, strove to create national sentiment where no national sentiment existed; to transform local patriotism into German patriotism by violent and instant action calculated to strike the imagination, such as that of Schill, Brunswick, Katt, and recently that of the Tyrolese.

"Brunswick and Schill have failed; I have the Tyrolese in my grip," Napoleon reasoned, "but now the patriots play a more desperate card. Do they seek in their madness to give their cause a martyr? I will baulk them."

Nevertheless he did not see very clearly how this "baulking" was to be done. Staps's retort, blurred at the time by Bonaparte's preconceptions about England, stood out in menacing significance,—"If I fall, there are ten thousand behind me to take my place."

The history of Corsica is the history of conspiracies, and the theory that Staps had acted alone, that his appeal to those behind him might merely spring from the boy's faith that the ardour of others was like his own ardour, Napoleon did not consider worth investigation.

"No; it is the Tugendbund."

An incident of the preceding winter now occurred to Napoleon in corroboration of his own hypothesis.

"Why has a Jena succeeded a Rossbach?" ran one of the pamphlets which in November Fouché had placed under his eyes just as he was about to start for Spain. "Because the army of Frederick has ceased to be a national army. French patriotism can only be vanquished by *German* patriotism. When we speak of love of country we must once more accustom ourselves to the ideas of sacrifices and of death."

And the pamphlet had proceeded to comment indignantly on the decay of German national sentiment. It derided the cosmopolitanism of which German writers boasted. Against the famous "cosmopolitans," Lessing, Herder, Jacobi, and Goethe, it quoted from their own writings the most dishonouring and dishonourable maxims, such as,—

"Of all forms of pride national pride is the most absurd." Alcibiades' cynical apologia had, it alleged, been cited with approbation by Lessing,—"That is my country where it is well with me." Euripides's nobler sentiment, lauded by Jacobi, was also held up to mockery,—

ἅπτας μεν αης ἀιέτῳ περασιμος
ἅπασα δε χθῶν ανδρι γενναίῳ πατας

"To the eagle the universal air is open;
And to the freeman, the universal earth."

The pamphlet had concluded with a virulent diatribe against Napoleon in person,—"The betrayer of the princes in the Confederation of the Rhine, the betrayer of Prussia; but, indeed, whom has Napoleon not betrayed? What pledge the most solemn did the Consul Bonaparte not violate? What promise the most sacred has the Emperor Napoleon ever fulfilled? Sardinia, Venice, Rome, Spain, victims in turn of his black treachery—these are the witnesses, these are the accusers! In France itself Bonaparte has sworn fidelity to every constitution and broken every oath thus sworn. He has conspired against every constitution of his country in turn and now conspires against the human race itself, and, hell in his heart and chaos in his head, he rushes on blindly to his own destruction or the havoc of a world.

Distrusting Fouché, Napoleon had caused an independent translation to be made; he had discovered in Fouché's version several discrepancies. Nothing had been inserted, nothing omitted, but several phrases in the paragraphs against himself had been envenomed. Here a word had been transferred, there point had been given to an epithet and epigrammatic force to the straggling German periods of the original. This he attributed to Talleyrand, for Fouché's own style was cloudy and prolix.

In Germany, the response to the fiery summons had been instantaneous. The thrill, the expectancy of a new life, a

new future, had passed from end to end of the Fatherland. The old, the young, all that was free, all that was noble, had uprisen around Schill or followed his enterprise with beating hearts. Women had caught the infection. At Magdeburg they had exchanged their trinkets of gold and silver for those of iron and steel. Amongst the dead after Schill's last stand lay a young trooper; but when the helmet was removed a mass of tresses had rolled out covering the dead warrior's shoulders. It was a woman. The centuries were grey, but in 1809, when all literary Germany was studying the recently discovered *Nibelungenlied*, the heroines of Ariosto and Tasso were being imitated beside the Elbe.

Such was the pamphlet, such the ideas, the memories, the voices that to-night at Schönbrunn in the palace of the Habsburgs assailed Napoleon; and as the testimony of their import, the dagger of that morning lay in a cabinet against the wall.

"Restoration of religion?" he reflected savagely. "The league of virtue . . . a nation's bond of valour . . . by my murder? En verité, a nation of ideologues, madmen, and dreamers, these Germans!" And half aloud in his excitement he cried, "If Davout had but caught Stein at Brünn! But, general or marshal, they are always late."

At Brünn, sixty miles north of Vienna, the great exile, crossing the snowy ravines of the Riesengebirge in a sledge in the wintry darkness, had in the beginning of the year, found refuge. There, in frequent communication with Stadion and the Emperor Francis, he had lived during the campaign so fatal to Austria and to the nascent hopes of German patriotism and German nationality. In July, the Third Corps under Davout was on him; but, warned of danger, the exile had escaped to Troppau just in time; for had Davout found him at Brünn his fate would have been the fate of Schill and of Palm.

But Napoleon never wasted mind-force upon what might

have been. The "is" was absorbing enough. He stopped by a window, and stood staring into the blackness. The panes, backed by the inky darkness of the moonless night, reflected his own face like a mirror of polished ebony.

"To-morrow it is peace or war, and to-morrow is already to-day."

With lightning rapidity he ran over in imagination the armies at his command—at Gratz, Linz, Brünn, around Vienna itself, and in his rear, stretching from the mouth of the Scheldt to the headwaters of the Danube and the Rhine.

"They date my greatness from Toulon. Bah, I have to recommence my fate every hour. Every day is with me an 18th Brumaire. But I shall set out for Paris to-morrow night."

He yawned; he felt sleep invading him now; but instead of undressing, he once more threw himself on the sofa.

A singular lucidity was all about his mind. The body seemed to rest only to permit the intellect to perform its functions the more perfectly. He did not close his eyes, knowing from experience how useless in such moments of insomnia that device had proved. Annoyed at last by the light in the room, he got up and walked rapidly to the door. Rustum was on guard, but sound asleep. Napoleon looked at the round fat features of the Mameluke. They had a certain resemblance to his own as seen in the hollow of a spoon, and expressed so thorough a self-content that it became contagious and he smiled.

"Yet what a life has been Rustum's. Well-born, yet a slave since childhood; his mother, his sisters, made slaves also by the same evil chance—there he lies, the happiest man, the soundest sleeper in my army, enjoying everything, disturbed by nothing."

He dropped the portière, and attempted himself to reach the candelabra. It was too high for his short legs, but getting on a chair he blew out three of the lights, leaving only

one burning. As he got down the branch of the candelabra by which he had steadied himself snapped in his hand.

Napoleon nearly lost his balance and might have had a bad fall. Enraged at the contretemps, he was about to smash the candelabra; but he turned away with a shrug.

"False," he muttered, "a sham, like everything else in Vienna and like everything else in Germany—sham patriotism, sham agriculture, sham fortifications."

The bedroom had in the preceding summer been occupied by one of the archduchesses, and had been refurnished in the French style, but instead of the real bronzes of Versailles an imitation inwood had been substituted, to save expense and perhaps also to encourage the Viennese world by royal example to patronize the Tyrol, where the peasants of the Grünerwald manufactured those imitations with amazing skill from the wood of the Siberian pine, a tree that grows only on the edge of the glacier.

The accident gave a new direction to Napoleon's thoughts. The owner of four magnificent and richly upholstered palaces, full of priceless works of art, the plunder of three nations, he experienced for this grandiose poverty of Schönbrunn a plutocratic contempt almost like that of a wealthy visitor who has broken a gim-crack ornament in a sea-side lodging. The rooms were multitudinous but small; the rococo and Chinese decorations faded; the pictures bad; and then, the incredible barbarity of those statues used to heat the grand staircase!

"It is I, the successor of Charlemagne, it is I who have to show even kings how to be kings, and emperors how to keep house."

But to-night he could not keep up his blague. To-night Schönbrunn seemed haunted. The very name "The Grünerwald" had an ominous sound. There in February last a French division under Lefebvre had laid down its arms to the Tyrolese. And now in the stillness of this dreary hour he

seemed to hear voices about him and the sound as of ghostly laughter. He could distinguish the very voices—Metternich, Bubna, Schwartzenberg, Liechtenstein, Stadion, Francis himself:

"Bonaparte the successor of Charlemagne? Ha! Ha! Ha! Bonaparte to instruct the Habsburg princes in elegance! Bonaparte! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

It was fancy, but it was a singular and disconcerting fancy, for it compelled him, here in the palace of the Habsburgs, to remember the line of provincial attorneys or poverty-stricken officials from whom he himself was sprung.

"Men are ruled by toys! I would not say that before the mob, but in a council of wise men one may speak the truth."

It was his own voice speaking in the Council, defending his creation of ducs, comtes, peers, the Legion of Honour—and the memory tranquillized him.

"Bah," he reflected, "if birth gave men brains or women beauty . . . but though the Habsburgs are fertile as rabbits, they have produced in three hundred years only one woman of sovereign beauty and only two men above mediocrity—Charles V. and the Archduke, my rival."

He stretched himself on the sofa, and putting one foot on a brocaded chair of grey and gold, he closed his eyes and deliberately composed himself to sleep.

The fire was sinking. The ashes of the huge log rustled. The unburnt remainder would smoulder on for an hour or two, he thought, and of their own accord his eyes now closed. In his favourite phrase, "he had shut all the drawers of the cabinet of his thoughts."

Nevertheless, he was conscious of the tremendous silence and of the objects in the room, amid which the high-bred ironic features of the great Maximilian loomed portentous. Once he opened his eyes, but with a frown that left a fold above his eyebrows, he instantly closed them again.

It was sleep at last, profound, dreamless as the sleep that

he had known amid the cannonade of Wagram. He lost all sense of time. Hours might have passed or *days or merely* seconds.

III

All at once he was wide awake, or seemed to be awake—and it was a ghastly awakening. His heart was beating faintly as though each throb were to be its last, and from head to foot he felt torpid, icy cold, and oppressed by an immense dread.

Yet for several seconds he did not stir, endeavouring to find the causes of these sensations. Had he eaten to excess? He had eaten his usual dinner, drunk the single glass of wine that he permitted himself daily, and to conquer his fatigue before setting out for the theatre he had drunk a cup of coffee.

"Ah, it is that seizure this afternoon—the same effects as in August"; he concluded. "I might have anticipated this."

He struggled to get up, but almost instantly an exclamation of surprise escaped him. Right in front between him and the wall to the right of the fireplace, though he could not explain how a human body could stand thus and stand there, he saw the figure of a boy, blonde-haired and blue-eyed, with a face of great softness and charm. It was his would-be assassin, Friedrich Staps, now sleeping his last sleep, if he slept, in the Leopold Bastion hard by the arsenal. Napoleon surveyed his visitor with curiosity, attracted, as always, by intrepedity.

"For what has he come here?"

He felt none of the horror, at least consciously, that Staps had evoked in him that afternoon.

But a second visitor now stood beside the first—not less boyish in appearance, and dressed in much the same fashion; but in every other respect widely different; for this was a

dark-complexioned youth, the face a long oval, the eye disturbing in its restless hawk-like scrutiny, the figure erect, and face and figure alike fascinating and troubling in the extreme.

As the two boys, their hands clasped in friendship, thus stood confronting him, Napoleon's attention fixed itself upon the second.

"Tiens!" he said suddenly. "How curious! It is myself—as I was, long ago. What the devil am I doing here?"

It was grotesquely impossible.

But in an instant he was in Corsica. It was summer. The exquisite fragrance of the wild flowers, abundant in the valleys and even in the gorges, was all about him, a fragrance he had never forgotten and on Sainte Hélène was still to remember.

"Ah, I recollect. Stay a moment," he said to his visitors. "We should understand each other—stay."

He walked rapidly to an escritoire and unlocking a drawer, then a secret inner drawer, took out a small thin book. In places it was interleaved. The margins also were covered with his own handwriting, a very marked but still legible hand, with rapid and frequent changes, as though it varied with the tension or relaxation of his mind. He turned the pages hurriedly and stopped at the following words:

"What a frightful hour is this in my country's history! A nation of twenty-five millions pours itself in a torrent of ruin on its smiling shores. France! Woe to thee, France, thou nation of slaves and despots! Ah, if the oppressors of my land had but one breast, with what joy, with what ardour would not I plunge my dagger into that bosom. . . ."

Yes, he himself, he himself at eighteen, exactly as he now stood there hand in hand with Friedrich Staps, he had written those words, and in every tingling nerve he had felt the resolution which still burned in those words.

He turned joyously to the two figures; the dazzling wine

of youth and the fervour of his own heroic enthusiasms leapt and glowed in his veins.

"What? It is for this you have come? I remember! That dream of liberty! A dead tyrant is the noblest sacrifice we can offer to the gods! Let us sit down and talk together, you and I. Soyons amis, Cinna!"

In the bizarre chaos of a dream Bonaparte had mixed his manhood's favourite passage from Corneille with his naïve delight at meeting his own boyhood again. And embracing in his invitation the Habsburg portraits on the wall:

"Tyrants and tyrannicides, let us sit and confer together."

But as if in anger at this levity, or as if their mission were fulfilled, the two spectral visitants seemed to recede and to dissolve before his eyes, and in a second a kind of spectral light alone was left to betray where they had stood.

A profound dejection seized Napoleon; and with a sickening presage about the heart he turned to the pages in his hand and not in joy now but like one who longs yet fears to disturb the sanctuaried majesty of death, he read on. And on an interleaved fragment the words sprang up before him, —"Man, O man, enslaved how thou art degraded; but how noble when fired by the ardour for freedom! Forgive me, forgive me, O God, but everywhere on this earth suffering and sorrow are the lot of the just man; yet the just man is Thy image."

It was his prayer at nineteen, his, there in Corsica, there in his native land, not twenty years ago. To-night that same prayer must have been this young Thuringian's before he stretched himself on his plank bed for his last sleep. And on the same page, aureoled in glory as he himself had written them then and as his prisoner had spoken them that afternoon, he saw the names of Tell, Brutus, Miltiades, Regulus.

"Prodigious contradiction! Then and now! What a tragedy!" he said, without knowing exactly what he meant.

And swift as falling leaves other passages in his own hand-writing confronted him—portraits of tyrants side by side with portraits of traitors. Now it was his terrible denunciation of Buttafuoco, the betrayer of Paoli. "From Bonifacio to the Corsican cape, from Ajaccio to Bastia, there is but one voice and that voice is raised to curse your name. Your friends conceal themselves; your kindred disown you; in this hour even the prudent man is swept on headlong in this torrent of indignation. What are your crimes? Let me unfold them to you. . . ."

The sentences which followed were sometimes awkward but it was the awkwardness of the young gerfalcon which has not yet felt the azure. The sentiment was audacious or inflated, but its burning sincerity could not be questioned, and Napoleon felt the perspiration burst on his brow as he read on, and guaged the emotion raging in Staps and in thousands of young Germans by the emotion which had raged in himself when he wrote, "I see but the phantom dagger: I hear in my sleep but the tyrant's death-cry."

For Corsica substitute Europe, for a rock flung like a torn spear-head far into the Mediterranean substitute a continent, and was not this the wrath and hate and scorn which he himself inspired in every breast still capable of the love of country, still capable of the love of freedom?

He in his youth must have been obsessed with this ardour and with this despair. "Will no one," ran one passage, "be found with valour enough to leave his poignard in the heart of the oppressor?" "The gods spare the tyrant," ran another, "Heaven's lightning does not smite him, but it is to leave him to the sword of the just man." "A tyrant," he read again, "is the noblest sacrifice we can offer on the altar of freedom." And the portrait of the tyrant thus delineated by himself at eighteen was the portrait of himself at forty, that portrait as it was now outlined,

clumsily or incisively, in every pamphlet or brochure of the Tugendbund.

Napoleon read no more; but thrusting aside the book he turned as though about to address his phantom visitors; but there was not a trace of their presence. Even the spectral radiance had vanished and the only light in the room was that of the solitary guttering candle in the candelabra.

"Yes, yes," he mused. "It was so. It was so. In my youth I thought these things."

A horrible strangling emotion came over him, grief—the lost enthusiasms of youth, man's hopes—an emotion that should have been tears but was only a sterile attempt at tears, a sorrow profound, immense, and tender as that which still invaded him when in the distance he heard in the twilight the bells for vespers and thought of Corsica.

Suddenly he was speaking to Josephine, then to Berthier, then to Corvisart, then to Duroc in clamorous, earnest protest, and a paralysing, a conscious horror had gripped him by the brain, had gripped him by the heart. It was the terror which he had felt after he had pointed to the star that afternoon. It was the terror of madness, and with it the distinct ghastly certainty that if he remained alone for ten seconds longer his brain would burst and he would drop to the floor a gibbering maniac.

Decisive always, Napoleon, by a frightful effort of will, broke through his torpor and stood on his feet. The dream-reality and the real dream had alike vanished. He was broad awake now, but his hands still trembled and the icy horror lay all about his heart. Rushing to the portière, he stood for a second over his sleeping valet.

"Rustum!" he called out sharply in an unnatural, strained voice, high-pitched and shrill. "Rustum!"

The Mameluke slept the sleep of the camel-driver, who in Syria can only be roused by thumping his head on a stone. And Napoleon raised his spurred heel as though to waken

him in that savage fashion, conspicuously kind though he always was to his servants. The Mameluke, however, opening his eyes, stood up smiling, confronting his master. But at the fearful expression on Napoleon's countenance the smile was struck dead.

"Call Corvisart. No, stay, call—the duc de Friuli. But light more candles. Quick, you imbecile! What do you stand staring at?"

"Me sleep, your Majesty," Rustum said in a frightened voice, as he passed with a taper from sconce to sconce.

"To whom do you tell that? Do I not know it? No; not Corvisart. Send the duc de Friuli here."

He examined the escritoire. The key had not been in the lock. He glanced at the fireplace. The log had tilted forward a little, but from the shape of the embers the whole occurrence could not have lasted many minutes.

IV

Some minutes later, when Duroc in the uniform of the cuirassiers of the Guard entered, Napoleon was walking from corner to corner of the room, now gesticulating, now muttering to himself, now taking pinches of snuff one after the other, and sneezing violently and repeatedly.

Duroc was a good-looking man of seven and thirty. His manner was grave; his distinction of bearing very marked. Like Davout, he sprang from the *noblesse;* but the latter, a Burgundian, affected a harsh and surly bearing, whilst an Auvergnat, expressed in his voice and in his gestures a conscious refinement and polish. But, courtier or confident, Duroc had never ceased to be a soldier, and at this moment he looked a soldier every inch of him, for he had interpreted the summons as a summons to a council of war, assembled at this untimely hour to deliberate upon Austria's rejection of the ultimatum.

The first glance at Napoleon undeceived him. It filled him, however, with anxieties of another sort; for his affection for the Emperor, as we have seen, was deep and personal, and Corvisart after the Opera had spoken to him in private of the seizure of that afternoon and its possible consequences.

"The Emperor must have a change, and that quickly," the physician had declared, "and he ought to have plenty of sleep. He should not have gone to the theatre to-night nor worked with Ménéval afterwards. He laughs at my warnings; he may listen to you."

And Corvisart had stated his diagnosis of the Emperor's condition, using the terminology of the period, the psychology of Condillac which divides the body into separate temperaments—nerveux, bilieux, etc.; and the mind into separate faculties—will, imagination, judgment, feeling, appetites, etc.

"Until now the Emperor's imagination has been controlled by his will; but if once his imagination throws off that will, mighty as it is—well, you saw him this afternoon."

It was, therefore, with a sickening sense of alarm that Duroc found the Emperor still fully dressed and evidently in a state of febrile agitation. The cause he could not even surmise, and Napoleon left him scant leisure for conjecturings.

"I am making the world better," he said, sweeping Duroc at once into the vortex of his ideas. "I am making the world better," he repeated, as though to drive a text into the mind of an auditor. "How could I toil thus, or live an hour of such a life as mine, if I had not that belief? Think of my work! In France I put down the Terror, the greatest act of vengeance and beneficent justice ever carried out by a single mind. This even my enemies admit. I restored religion. I made Paris the capital of a new civilization,

adorned her with magnificent buildings, filled her with treasures and works of art. Commerce thrives, and after giving France the greatest law system since Justinian's, I have this very year thrown the Sorbonne's lumber of mediævalism into the dust-heap and given France the University. But they complain I have made France a barracks, gagged the press, and silenced the tribune. Ringed in by sleepless hate, mined in every province by conspiracy, how else was France to be saved? And by my creation of a new military State I have re-vitalized the discredited ideas of authority, kingship, and empire. Thus I have saved the Revolution and imposed respect upon its adversaries. And for Europe—what designs I had, what plans! In Spain I have abolished torture and put down the Inquisition, and made hordes of lazy friars tillers of the ground. In Italy Milan is free and Florence is rising from her ashes. At Campo Formio I lanced the abscess of which Venice was dying. I have exterminated the brigands of the Campagna and Calabria. I united Sicily to Naples, its geographical and historical complement. But the Papacy? The Papacy is still as in the days of the Borgias, the stone thrust into Italy's side to keep the wound open; but I am determined to pluck out that stone. If Pius VII. will not act like a man of sense he must be treated like any other dangerous fool. But what a task is Rome itself! I can drain the Pontine marshes, but to give an heroic or even a reasonable soul to that Roman rabble—that I cannot do. . . . Germany owes me not less than Sicily, Italy, and Spain owe me. You talk, you others, of the fall of the Bastille. . . ."

Napoleon seemed to be addressing Hulin, Augereau, and the Jacobins, and he waited for three seconds as though expecting some answer from these invisible listeners. He went on with a rush:

"The fall of the Bastille? Germany was covered with Bastilles. I gave Germany my Code, and on the day I flung

open her law-courts a thousand Bastilles fell. I would have done as much for England. There I would have established a republic; given Ireland a constitution, Scotland her ancient kings, and revivified English jurisprudence by my Code."

Duroc did not blench. His ignorance of England, of English history and institutions was colossal as his master's.

"And yet they seek to murder me!" Napoleon exclaimed. "England, Rome, Italy, Austria, Prussia, five leagued assassins, hunt me down! Ah, Duroc, if my murder could but set Europe free or realize the benefits I would have bestowed on mankind, how willingly would not I offer my breast to their poignards! And had that dagger reached my heart this morning, dying, I could without blasphemy have uttered the prayer of Jesus, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

The sentiment did not strike Duroc as either forced or false. He was accustomed to sudden displayals of this trait in Napoleon's character. He was puzzled, however, to account for the manifestations of such feeling to-night and at this hour for, on retiring, the Emperor had shown not a trace of such a frame of mind.

"Your enemies," he said rather formally, "will have to force a way through many devoted breasts before their daggers reach yours, Sire."

Napoleon seized the word.

"My enemies? But who are now my enemies? It is the peoples; it is the oppressed whose miseries I wished to alleviate. It is the down-trodden whom I wish to upraise. Everywhere it is the same story—in the Tyrol, in Catalonia, in the Illyrian provinces, and in Portugal, Hungary, and Poland, and throughout Germany from the Oder to the Rhine, the slaves I would have set free lift their manacled hands and with a curse dash them in the face of their liberator. And why, mon Dieu, and why?

The coalized kings I could have resisted, their allied governments I could one by one have subdued; but the coalized peoples—how am I, how is France to make war upon the peoples? And that boy this morning, Duroc, that *miserable*, that fanatic, he came as *their* emissary, blind, armed with a blinded people's mandate!"

"Your Majesty . . ." Duroc expostulated; but with a gesture of denunciatory fury Napoleon went from the event straight to its cause.

"And the perverters of the peoples? They are the priests forged with English gold, and amongst the peoples themselves, it is superstition, bigotry, it is ignorance fed year by year with English lies. And how successful! In Spain, in the streets, by yelling monks and priests, and in the hiding places of the guerillas by countless pamphlets, I am proclaimed as Anti-christ, Satanias. They make puns on my name, Napoleon, Appolyon, Hell's agent. The deluded rabble believe, and with such priests and such peasantry do your noble English fight side by side! In the Tyrol, the emigré Chastelar, on whose estates men ate grass, is a hero, and the capuchin Haspinger and the innkeeper Hofer complete the triumvirate; and, by God, not three weeks ago, this noble peasant and this exemplary priest would have shot dead my envoy, violating the most rudimentary principles of war, had not a train of artillery hovered into sight with matches lighted!"

"Chastelar, not Hofer, was the instigator," Duroc said reassuringly. "Your Majesty rewarded his intended victim."

Napoleon made a gesture of impatience.

"And of what is it they complain, these Tyrolese? What is it to those herdsmen, farmers, wood-carvers, and shopkeepers, whether they pay their taxes at Munich or Vienna? I rescue them as I rescued Pavia, Verona, Milan, and Padua from the Austrian bureaucrats; I take them into my system;

they are permitted to serve in my armies; I give them laws, religious tolerance, enlightenment; they share the glories of the French arms, and merit this, for they are brave. Yet they rise up against me, preferring to my freedom their hereditary bondage to Austria!"

With a sudden gleam in his eyes, as though aware of the irony implicit in the concluding phrase, Napoleon turned aside with the sardonic comment:

"It is encouraging, all this, is it not, and gratifying to the world-emancipator? Men talk of the wrongs of the oppressed; let us talk a little of the wrongs of the tyrant, if I am a type of the oppressor! But I have aimed too high. To a superstitious race, you can bring enlightenment; and to a misgoverned people, justice; but freedom, national independence! That is the one gift you never can bestow upon a nation. *That* can be won only where Leonidas and Themistocles won it—the field of glory. The greatest wrong I could do to the Tyrolese, the greatest wrong I could do the Spaniards, would be to withdraw my armies."

He offered Duroc his snuff box, and when the latter coughed—for the passages in Schönbrunn are cold and Duroc had just risen from a comfortable bed—Napoleon made him stand by the fire, whilst he himself, his hands twisting and untwisting behind his back, resumed his monotonous pacing of the floor.

V

His next words came from a region of ideas into which Duroc could not penetrate.

"Why do men trust so confidently," Napoleon began in a low and melancholy voice, "that posterity in its judgments will be wiser than our contemporaries? History can only be corrected by itself, and history, most of it, is calumny, voluntary or involuntary. More lies are told hourly

from want of intelligence than from deceit. How few have the seeing eye, the understanding heart! Look at the story of the Cæsars. How do we know that Tacitus was not a pedant, a *cuistre*, and Tiberius a magnanimous ruler? The latter's countenance is a countenance worn by much anger and pain. Yet who seeks to pierce behind the paragraphs of the *Annals?* And in modern times what murderous facilities for calumny has not man invented! And these, these my enemies have employed against me. What have they not said? What have they not made the peoples believe of me? This morning was a proof of their success. What did that hot-head say? Ten thousand daggers in the hands of ten thousand fanatics like himself—all pointed against one man's breast!"

The mask of calm was preserved; but as Napoleon proceeded the concentrated trembling intensity of his words seemed to shake the walls and, vibrating in the nocturnal stillnesses, to die away only in the most distant rooms of the palace.

"Never a day's, never an instant's respite in the war of lies, besmirching my government, my ministers, my marshals, my soldiers, my family, my brothers, my wife, my sisters. The lie! It is still the instinctive weapon of the vile, and it has still been England's weapon against me! I am at her mercy. Her putrid eyes have discovered my weakness; for I and my government are one. Who strikes at me strikes at France. She herself is immune, and, coward-like, how the hypocrite nation has used her advantages: Ten years since Egypt—ten years of truceless obloquy, lies and still more lies! Not a day on which they have not gone forth from England like flies from a carrion by the road, accusing me of secret murders, unnameable actions, incests, perjuries, fratricidal rage—yes, great God, if I were a spirit from the foulest stye in Hell it would dishonour for ages the greatest nation on earth to say of me

the things that England says! Why, to-night, at this dead hour, you can almost hear her printing-presses groaning in labour with the hell-brood that to-morrow shall be scattered to every capital in Europe—Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, Stockholm, Dresden, Rome, Seville, Madrid and here in Vienna itself; yes, here in Schönbrunn."

There now came a sudden look of devilry into Napoleon's face, a glint as of lightning into his eyes, and on his lips quivered a fugitive mocking smile.

"And at Schönbrunn, Duroc? My servants are loyal, tried, faithful; how comes it that every act I perform and every word I say is known in London ten hours afterwards? Tell me, Monsieur le duc de Friuli."

But before Duroc could formulate a syllable, a thunderous look replaced the smile, and making his spurred heel ring on the floor Bonaparte exclaimed with extraordinary energy:

"Make peace with England? I will never make peace with England until I have brought on her a humiliation greater than the humiliation of Prussia, or until I myself am dead in battle or like Bajazet, chained not in a Mongol cage but in a fouler dungeon—an English prison-ship!"

Then, with marvellous skill, adapting to his mood the incidents of his dream, at once justifying himself and pillorying his enemy, he said in a singular voice:

"I began my life as a hater of tyranny. The death of tyrants was the meditation of my boyhood. I have lived and shall die a hater of tyranny; but the tyranny against which in my manhood I wage ruthless war is more repulsive than any which seared my youth. It is the world-tyrant, England—that nightmare power which throttles genius or superior thought wherever it dares lift its head. 'England!' the name is wormwood to me!"

He stood with working brow, silent.

"This globe is the fief of England! It corrodes my very

soul, Duroc. Men do not think; they will not understand. Assyria's harryings of her subject provinces, Rome's calculated cruelties, are less abhorrent than this hypocrite empire. Where is it to end? In a little while on this planet itself, no freeman will have an inch of earth on which he can stand without asking permission in English! I tell you, it corrodes my very soul. If I fall, I shall fall in one of the greatest causes humanity has undertaken, earth's last stand, this earth's supreme effort to bring England down!"

Duroc, uncertain whether he was listening to the outlines of a new war, of a resumption of the Boulogne enterprise now that peace with Austria was secure, or whether it was merely Napoleon's exasperation, seeing England behind the Tugendbund and the dagger of Staps as he saw England behind the revolt in Spain and the Tyrol, became infected by Napoleon's emotion.

"Bring England down, Sire! Your Majesty is on the very brink of success! Your blockade is already sapping her strength; wages have everywhere fallen, prices everywhere risen; already her rich men are discontented, the middle sort impoverished, the poor starving; and discontented, starving, and impoverished men are ever ready to rebel. Why, your Majesty, there are already reports of rioting in Lancashire! Seven English banks have failed since August; her navy is mutinous; she has had to open her prisons to get volunteers for the Peninsula, yet this year's harvests rot in the fields!"

Duroc stopped, waiting to see the effect of his words.

But a change had taken place in Napoleon. The magnetic energy had forsaken him. Plunged in gloomy abstraction he seemed to listen yet not to hear. And indeed his minister's arguments were calculated to depress rather than to inflate the Emperor's pride. Napoleon had an instinct for fact. He had gauged the resources of England. The "starvation" war, *le blocus*, had lasted three years and in

the English line he perceived not a trace of yieldingness. Duroc's picture of impoverishment and discontent might or might not be accurate of the British Isles; it was irrefutably and damnably true of France. Twice a day his courier from Paris added fresh hues to that picture.

"England on her knees!" It was an insult to his reason; nevertheless he did not contradict his minister. Faith is power, and faith is contagious; Duroc's might communicate itself to others.

"My right wing from the Scheldt to the Oder and along the Baltic to the Neva is now secure, solid as adamant. Prussia and the Czar are my firm allies. To Spain, my left wing, I will send Masséna to-morrow to hold Wellington in check or overwhelm him at Lisbon; whilst I in Paris, my centre, control the whole. This is my war of Europe against the islanders. And yet," Napoleon said suddenly, sitting down and resuming his pensive tone, "and yet something within me tells me that I shall fall in that war. On such nights as this and in such hours I forefeel the future. My end is fixed, and that end is disaster. I have ceased to augur of success or failure. I ask only—When will it come? How and in what shape? The bullet which struck me at Ratisbon is one way; that dagger this morning——"

It was Duroc in his amazement or affection who interrupted the Emperor.

"He was a mere fanatic, Sire; a schoolboy made crazy by reading . . ."

"A schoolboy!" Napoleon exclaimed, casting off the momentary prostration, "I tell you, Duroc, that dagger is the preliminary flash announcing a storm in which you, I, and France itself shall be overwhelmed!"

It was genuine prophetic insight; for behind the enthusiasm of the Tugendbund and the resolution of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau was the rising of Germany; Leipzig, Hanau, the passage of the Rhine, Laon, and Montmirail,—then Elba

and Sainte Hélène; but, as often in Bonaparte's history, prodigal of such instances, its significance was obscured to himself as to others by the scepticism of the period. Yet at this moment he seemed indeed to discern the future—there palpable in front of him, actual as the present or the past, and his mind grappled for an instant with the eternal problem—Is the future in very deed actual as the past?

Bonaparte had little patience for such problems, though to-night, mixed with the omens and events of the day and his dream or vision of a few minutes ago, it left a singular expression in his eyes.

"Sire, you need rest," Duroc now pleaded; "Austria's reply may be here at any moment. This day has tried you. You need sleep."

"Rest?" Napoleon answered. "I sleep, but I never rest. Alone or in company, eating, walking, riding, driving, I am always at work, forging my way through plans and problems to solutions and decisions. You, Duroc, Corvisart, Berthier and the others—I know what was in your thoughts to-night; but you are all wrong. I shall never go mad. My brain is of iron. For ten years I have governed France and Europe; and for ten years I have been my own finance minister, my own war minister. My home and foreign ministers simply expressed my will. Yet whatever I have done myself has been well done, whatever I have entrusted to others has been bungled. My budgets are miracles of success. I could not be my own admiral, and at sea I have a Trafalgar to remember. No; the limitations to my power of sight or hearing I have experienced; but never the limitations to my power of work; not until now . . ." he said to himself. "But now I seem doomed to experience every humiliation . . . Well!" he cried suddenly in an indescribable voice, "Destiny turns against me; I will turn against Destiny! Yes, I will be the antagonist of Destiny!"

The Corsican accent had returned to his voice but the expression of his face was loftier. Bonaparte's mind, which always worked at several ideas simultaneously, had worked to this issue—that comparison of his life to a tragedy which he had made before the duc de Friuli entered.

"The antagonist of Destiny!"

To Duroc's somewhat precise military mind the phrase, even from Napoleon, was startling, and he looked at his master in furtive doubt and incredulity. Annoyed, Napoleon turned on him swiftly.

"Why do you look at me like that? What is in your mind? Answer!"

Duroc made a protesting gesture.

"Nothing, Sire; indeed nothing."

But the tone was ineffective, and did not deceive Napoleon for a second.

"I know your thought but, mon pauvre Duroc, you are wrong. For this is how you reason. You imagine what it would mean if you, Berthier, Corvisart, or Rapp spoke in this way, acted in this way; and you, mon pauvre Duroc, you become afraid of me and for me. But you are wrong. I tell you, I will never go mad, Never!"

Duroc became perfectly pale.

"Madness?" Napoleon went on, resuming the tragic, whispering tones. "No; I could not bear that. Poor Pfeister! You remember? How horrible it was, how horrible! That a man, nature's paragon, should thus sink . . . Ten million deaths were better. But I will never go mad. Whatever my enemies say of me, never believe that I am mad, Duroc."

Napoleon was referring to a persistent rumour circulated in France, Germany, and Spain, in Paris in the subterranean Royalist press, in English and even in such northern newspapers as the *Scots Examiner*, hinting or openly declaring that Napoleon had in August been struck with madness.

The Edinburgh rag had cited instances of insane monarchs, especially Ivan the Terrible, whose hideous crimes it compared to Bonaparte's. Esquirol, the great Spanish alienist, had certainly been summoned to Schönbrunn. For the valet Pfeister? It was unlikely. For, asked the *Examiner*, is Napoleon so attached to a mere body-servant as to bring a physician six hundred miles in the midst of a campaign to treat him for a nervous breakdown?

Duroc saw and seized an opportunity of retrieving the blunder of his unfortunate word or too visible thought.

"Sire," said he, "it matters nothing to a great man what we think of him or say of him, we others. It matters only to ourselves. It is not the great man, but we, who are affected if we feed our souls with lies instead of truths. What can the muddy vapours above the marsh matter to the sun?"

"Yes," Napoleon answered with a short laugh into which all his cynicism and enthusiasms had filtered, "that is very well—when we are dead. It matters nothing to the dead man lying underground what we remember or what we forget. But living, it matters supremely to ourselves, to the soldier as to the politician who has work to do amongst men. No; calumny is strong. To-night I said, did I not, that if I had to live my life over again I should not swerve one inch from the path I have trodden, that I regretted nothing, repented nothing? It was an error. I repent my acts of pardon."

Duroc, steadying his finger-tips on a table beside him, did not at once answer.

"Your Majesty," he began, "you wrong your mildness. You have never regretted an act of mercy."

But an adder-like thought darted through his mind and he stood silent. Intrigue, rancour, jealous suspicion, were in the very air at Schönbrunn. Marshals, generals, courtiers, lackeys, all were infected. Upon Napoleon, a Corsican, a

nature formed by century on century of the Vendetta and by deeply ingrained mistrust, Duroc had witnessed its effects. Bessières had damaged Lannes; and more recently Berthier and Murat had damaged to Napoleon's own hurt the greatest soldier in his army, Davout, the hero of Auerstädt and of Eckmühl. And the question rose in Duroc's mind,—"Have not I too my enemies? And have not I been responsible again and again for Napoleon's acts of pardon? Have my enemies been plying him this evening? Is that the meaning of this untimely summons—that the meaning of these soliloquizings? Does he suspect that I, suborned by Vienna or Weimar, wish him to pardon Staps?"

To suppose Duroc capable of such treachery would have been monstrous; but to a mind like Napoleon's, consumed by suspicions, surrounded by spies, nothing was monstrous.

And now in spite of himself Duroc averted his eyes before the searching cold scrutiny not unmixed with surprise in Napoleon's steady gaze. Then he made his decision.

"Sire, there are instances when leniency is a crime. I am not always on the side of mercy. Two months ago I urged you *not* to pardon Madame Oudet. The wrong to the Emperor, to yourself, you may forgive; but the wrong to France—how is that to be forgiven? In will if not in act this boy is a murderer, guilty amongst the guiltiest."

A profound sigh escaped Napoleon; and to Duroc's astonishment he flung himself on the sofa in a posture of deep dejection.

"You do not search the heart very deeply, mon pauvre Duroc. When the wrist falters and the aim is missed, whether the weapon be a poignard or a musket, who dares affirm that the first faltering was not in the mind? The psychologues leave all that unexplored. But an unsteady or irresolute hand, I affirm, points to an unsteady or irresolute will. If this youth's resolution had been steadfast this morning, steadfast as he protests, why did it fail him just

when it ought to have been at its highest? I would not have failed,—I had twenty Savarys and Berthiers rushed between me and my enemy."

Here Duroc lost all trace of the workings of the Emperor's mind and of the connection of his ideas. Napoleon, to whom the figures of his dream had now become a portion of the tissue of actual experience, integral and organic, was now attempting to exorcise the notion that he was a tyrant; he was seeking to erase the fancy that the young Thuringian hated him as he, the young Corsican, had hated the tyrants of his country.

"The hazard in things," Napoleon exclaimed, speaking in a voice which Duroc had rarely heard since the Hamlet-like soliloquizings of the long evenings in the Tuileries during the Consulate. "Youth's ignorance and the hazard in things! That wretched lad is but one more instance. Genius may be consummate at twenty; but knowledge of the human heart comes only by experience—and in acquiring that experience what perils must not youth encounter! In each individual of merit the woes of the race are rehearsed. We read a book, and, mistaking the hemlock for the grape-vine, 'It is Heaven's very voice,' we say. We hear a speech; we arise and obey the divine summons, and with a whirr and snap Fate's trap closes on us! . . . I was early instructed in misery; I have not forgotten the errors I made, and nature's harsh chastisements. Rousseau, when I was sixteen, was my first guide to chaos. Then came my hero-worship for Paoli. Yet we *had* a cause in Corsica; the tyranny against which we rose was tyranny indeed."

There was a sudden ring in his voice. In imagination Napoleon was confronting his two spectral visitants, challenging their criticism.

He resumed.

"I, betrayer of Liberty? It was not I who betrayed

Liberty but Liberty that betrayed me. I detected the imposture, saw through its deceptions more quickly than others—that is all. Man's last dream, I said? It shall also be man's last disillusionment. Men are not equal. Nature and the human soul protest against that monstrous creed. Even at sixteen I was not its dupe. God is distinction. The mob and its virtues God despises, and fills the mob's trough; but with the solitary great man He converses in the cool of the evening. But sometimes His words are swords."

After a silence of several seconds he resumed—"In place of Rousseau's shadow-creed, the equality of men, I determined to put a substance. I resolved to give to man's life new energies, new vigour; to resuscitate the ancient virtues, but to mould them into a new heroism. La carrière ouverte aux talents—the path of glory to him who can tread it! *That* was my message, that was my Koran. In Italy at six and twenty I inscribed that message on my banners; and with what a huzza of joy the young men of France bounded to the call! Montenotte, Lodi, Rivoli, Arcola—the glory of it, Duroc, the splendour, the intoxication, and the power! From the Tagliamento we looked towards Vienna—the gleam of our lances was enough, Austria made peace; and conquerors still, we swept in our revel of war to the Pyramids and the Nile. We returned; and after the burning desert we faced the Alps and their snows; and at Marengo the watch-word that I had given to France became the watch-word of a world. "The path to glory to him who can tread it!"

He paused. He looked around. Duroc sat as if in stone. Only the midnight silences answered Napoleon.

He went on with his singular reverie. Yet at this point the Emperor's rhetoric,—a kind of aphoristic grandiloquence, partly Corsican—it can easily be traced in Paoli and in the correspondence of Pozzo di Borgo—partly nur-

tured by the study of the Roman historians, always rhetorical even when most terse,—now took a tinge of ironic yet anxious questioning.

"It was a creed for Achilles and the ancient world, but not for modern France. For Asia I had too little faith; for modern Europe too much. The heroic eras are behind us. The day for the "doing of great things" is over. Bernadotte, you said this afternoon, "is envious, but not a traitor." Who taught you that envy was a crime? In the generous heart envy itself becomes generous. The glory of Miltiades keeps Themistocles awake at night and by that envy the victor of Marathon, though dead, fights at Salamis. I would have made Europe know again those lost virtues, valour, the high and spiritual valour and liberty of soul which sank with Hellas and Rome. The freedom I offered France was a more dazzling freedom than ever shone upon Rousseau's dream. My wars—they denounce my wars! Men do not understand. Men do not think. My wars have been the overflowing of the Nile; a devastation, but a devastation from which Europe would have arisen newborn. Talleyrand sniggered to the Czar at Erfurt that Russia was a barbarous nation governed by an enlightened ruler, France an enlightened nation governed by a barbarian. I welcome the epigram. À la bonne heure! Did not Charles XII. love to compare himself with Alexander? Yet what idea upbore Charles XII.'s wars except the aggrandizement of Sweden? Alexander's wars had in them an idea. He upreared by the Nile a city to his own godhead and crossed the Tigris to Hellenize Asia. My wars too had an idea—*une idée*—wide as humanity. I would have given all men a French mind. A new civilization should have dated from me, and A.N. instead of A.D. become the rubric of the centuries . . . Ah, if I could but have ten more years, Duroc, or even five. Much could be done in five. But no; it is useless, tragic and useless. I have come into

the world too late. Man's instinct for the heroic is gone, atrophied by two thousand years of priestcraft and hypocrisy. Genius and greatness lie dying, or—" Napoleon stopped, then with a sudden grotesque inspiration added—"suffocated under bales of English wool and Lancashire cotton!"

But his laugh was unpleasant, even terrible.

The mention of England, Duroc had observed, always made Napoleon's thoughts, so to speak, "inarticulate." Yet even to the worn-out Themistocles jargon the Emperor to-night had given a new and vitalizing touch.

"I was then the man of destiny," Napoleon went on. "Eh bien, I said, 'let us abjure heroism.' And I made myself practical. I said to feudal Europe, to moribund and decrepit Austria, to Germany and to Prussia,—'Your patents of nobility are obsolete; dry-rot consumes them. Behold, I show you a new nobility. He that has once been wounded in battle shall have one quartering; he that has been wounded twice, two quarterings; and he that hath twenty wounds shall sit down to table with any Hohenzollern, Habsburg, or Wittelsbach of you all.' Heavens! What an uproar! From the Volga to the Thames *haro* against the blasphemer! A score of purple-faced monarchs and their slaves bellowed against me—'Brigand, cut-purse, enemy of religion, monster of vice!' I made myself emperor, and the monster of yesterday was Monsieur mon frère of to-day. And the haughtiest of them vied with each other in offering their daughters to my brothers, to my stepson, and even to my valets. My gospel of heroism they rejected. I made myself a monarch amongst monarchs, and at their own game quickly surpassed them. My usurpations! My lawlessness! See the Hohenzollern, Romanoff, and Habsburg vultures round dying Poland! . . . And in this very palace, in this very room, what was the pet scheme that Joseph II. and his empress-mother

meditated day and night? It was to pawn Belgium for Bavaria and make of Munich another Warsaw. Yet the Jacobins, men like Hulin and Reynaud who ought to know better, grumble in secret—'Why is *he* not like Washington? Why make himself Emperor?' Washington! That Yankee deacon with his paltry one and a half millions scattered over millions of square miles, one man a mile, a new nation, a new land, severed by leagues of ocean from everywhere,—whilst I, in France, this immemorial monarchy, its traditions, prejudices, hopes, enmeshed in foreign policies of a thousand years . . . Washington and Napoleon! It is a theme for the eloquence of headmasters! Men of sense will not even give it a thought!"

VI

The silence had now a tinge of the supernatural, and began to affect Duroc. This room and the whole palace seemed haunted by the dead kings and emperors, princes and princesses, who had loved their loves and hated their hates here. The cessation of Napoleon's voice accentuated this effect, though like ghostly echoes its vibrant accents still seemed to linger about the corridors.

And in Duroc's soul there were echoings also—a life-scheme by him who had framed it, a life-scheme which he himself, Duroc, had lived through fourteen years that were like fourteen centuries; for to himself, as to Desaix and Rapp, Bonaparte had given a religion. Desaix or Lannes was the Khalid, the Sword of God, to this new Mohammed; Arcola and Marengo, the battles of Bedr and Damascus. All, in an incredible panorama whilst Napoleon was speaking, had been driving past Duroc's eyes, taken up as into a mountain. "A tyrant? This man a tyrant?" thought Duroc. "He is a hero, and has brought back the secret of heroism that was lost to the world with Roland and Charlemagne!"

And as though conscious of the very terms in which Duroc formulated that silent, fervid thought, Bonaparte's whole figure relaxed, and in a voice of almost playful charm, prefaced by a smile which gave a beauty to his lips, and to his countenance that tragic serenity seen only in certain Greek sculptures of the heroic period, he went on:

"Did Andréossy tell you? In Vienna here, in this city which I could raze to-morrow and draw a plough across its site as Rome did Carthage, or reduce to a cinder-heap as Genghis did Samarcand—in Vienna here it was discussed two days ago by a committee of the élite whether, without inviting me, they dared invite my aide-de-camp Montesquiou to some assembly in the Rittersaal that is to be held to-night. Yet it is by my permission that these preux chevaliers even enter that Rittersaal! But I, it seems, I have not the necessary number of quarterings. My valet de chambre possesses them!"

Here Napoleon's smile became laughter. He seemed in his joy at this exhibition of human fatuity to be on the point of pulling Duroc's ear. The latter even felt the fingers of the Emperor's hand before that hand had left the back of the sofa which it was tapping.

"These high-born mountebanks! In Vienna is not imbecility at its zenith? But with my Toison d'Or I will end all that as I ended that worm-eaten absurdity—the Holy Roman Empire. Tiens, see here."

The Emperor went to a cabinet and took out the first copy of the new Order executed in Paris from a design of Lejeune, Berthier's aide-de-camp, and received at Schönbrunn some days ago. Still standing by the cabinet, Napoleon examined the copy critically. A slight frown showed itself on his brow at once. He had at first sight been pleased with Lejeune's design; but to-night its ostentation outraged his common sense if not his taste. Still, he handed it to his minister without comment.

"You do not like it?" he said instantly.

"Your Majesty as ever reads my thoughts justly."

"But what is the matter with it? Dîtes, dîtes!—but it is not necessary. I know. I know."

He thrust the glittering gewgaw back into its case, lined with purple velvet, and shut the cabinet with a snap.

"N'en parlons plus. Let's say no more about it."

The new Order of Chevaliers was, in the conception of its inventor, to supersede or abase the Order instituted four centuries ago by Philip of Burgundy, blending so happily the ideas of mythology, commercialism, and mystic symbolism. Emperors, princes, kings, great barons had worn the ancient Order. It had gleamed on the breast of Egmont and of Horn as they walked to the scaffold. The new Order was an equally happy blending of Napoleon's habitual grandiosity in such matters and Lejeune's habitually offensive swagger. Lejeune, Berthier's aide-de-camp, overexcited by his adventure in the Tyrol, had drawn the French eagle grasping in its talons both the Golden Fleeces of Spain and Austria, whilst from its beak hung suspended the Fleece of France. To describe the design with Gentz as "a blasphemous parody," is folly or sycophancy; but the new Order had the fatal demerit of arrogance, and a few months later during the negotiations for the marriage with Marie Louise it was tacitly withdrawn.

"What a childish affair is this 'high' politics, is this 'great' history!" Napoleon said, reverting to the Rittersaal episode. "Ragamuffins shouting nick-names to each other—these are the solemn historians and the great politicians! I have lived in the palaces of my enemies as no Bourbon or Habsburg ever did; and when I ride through Vienna, Austria shoots out her underlip and grunts "parvenu!" England, when I make her millions quake from shore to shore, hypocrite England screams out 'ogre' and 'anti-Christ.' Mon Dieu, Duroc, who will deliver me from my future biographers?

Above all, who will deliver me from my encomiasts? From such mud, the biography I wish is a biography in which every sentence shall be the reverse of the truth; a biography in which I shall be described as surrendering at Ulm, or as defeated at Austerlitz; that I beheaded Talleyrand, and at Tilsit, on the raft, secretly strangled the Czar; burnt down Versailles, demolished the statues in the Vatican—que scais-je?"

Duroc was aware that this was not Napoleon's habitual manner in speaking of biography and of history. Only three weeks ago, for instance, upon the occasion of a secret embassy from the new King of Sweden, he had said to Blenstetter the envoy:

"The Swedes have done well to depose Gustavus IV. Let his successor profit by this example. Let him see in this one more proof that, whilst I live, the surest presage of disaster to a monarch is England's alliance. I am not entirely satisfied with your new sovereign's policy. It is timid, and unworthy of the name he bears. Why does he not read history? It is the only philosophy, and should be the instructor of kings."

But, more tactful than Rapp, gifted also with a finer discernment than that slightly wooden individual, Duroc asked for no reconciliation of the contradiction; perhaps he himself saw that the contradiction was only apparent, that the History of which Napoleon had spoken to-night was History viewed from a transcendental standpoint, and that to Blenstetter three weeks ago he was speaking of a homelier affair.

A singular and beautiful light flickered and sank, but rose again in Napoleon's eyes. The brooding introspection vanished. That beauty and terror which, in Bolli's phrase, made Napoleon's eyes "unlike those of any other mortal" flamed in them. Napoleon was about to speak of war; and the hero-gaze of the leader of armies for a moment had displaced Corvisart's nervopath.

"The ancients said in Homer, 'Nothing that crawls is more wretched than man.' I say, 'Nothing that crawls is viler than man,' and I have had experience enough and opportunity enough; and a despair, blacker than the blackest defeat, comes over me at times—contempt, a corrosive rage of contempt for the human race. To-day has brought me one of those moments . . . I can turn to that Tugendbund pamphlet and embrace the portrait of myself—the world-redeemer become the world-destroyer in loathing of that which once I would have saved. But in war is purity. What is the hideousness of war beside the hideousness of peace? Men do not understand. War is a flame; peace corrupts. War is incorruptible, ethereal as the elemental fire. The sufferings of war? Never more than one life pants out its agony on the battlefield. It is the regarding eye that sees the united misery. In that sapper crushed under a gun-carriage yesterday a tragedy bloody as Wagram was rehearsed. What battle of mine ever led to such concentrated tortures as the blundering British stumbling into that pest-house of Walcheren? War? Life is war. In all my battles never more than one man fell. I do not underrate the individual suffering—moi. It is to understand such suffering that I visit my battlefields after the victory. My enemies in their caricatures draw me as gloating over the wounds, the amputations——"

Duroc made a gesture of indignation.

"Sire, your Majesty—these infamous cowards . . ."

"What does indignation serve? You have seen the English newspapers. And why do I visit my battlefields? I visit them because I wish to see what this individual suffering means. I visit them because to the dying who lie there in my cause, dying for me, it is a consolation or a joy to see me. What am I in my old coat? A symbol, I suppose, a symbol, Duroc. Francis II. who watches his battle from a windmill ten miles away, and George III. who drivels up

and down Hampton Court gardens and never saw a battle even ten miles away, do not believe in this. How are they to believe in it? How are they to understand what it is to see one of those magnificent grenadiers stretched on the ground amid the wreckage of a fight, roaring with agony, suddenly spring to his feet, shout your name, 'Vive l'Empereur!' and fall dead, his face resplendent with happiness, if happiness be enough to describe the light which lights up that face——"

"I have seen it," Duroc said in a husky voice, deeply moved. "I have witnessed it, your Majesty."

A sudden sound startled him, and startled Duroc. The same interpretation traversed their minds simultaneously.

"It is Austria's answer."

There was an instant change in Napoleon's figure. The relaxed posture disappeared; energy in every muscle, every nerve strung, and in his eyes the battle-light, he was looking across the lines of war already.

But quicker than Duroc he saw the error that both had made, turning every sound into the order of ideas dominating the mind.

It was the footsteps of a sentinel, but it was also the striking of an hour, and the interchange of voices, challenge and answer. It was not a midnight visit, but merely the relief of the guard stationed throughout the palace at ten o'clock.

The Emperor and his minister were silent for several seconds. Neither alluded to the error; nor did either by any words affect to dissemble or make light of the error.

VII

"What is the hour?" the Emperor asked negligently when the various chimes, harsh or silvery, had died in the rooms or along the corridors and the supernatural silence once more crept over the palace.

"Two o'clock, Sire. In three hours day will break."

Napoleon showed no sign of taking the hint. Between him and Duroc there had intervened one of those charming moments of intimacy which, at least superficially, resembled the easy-goingness of two old friends sitting late, each certain of the other's tolerance; each feeling that he could speak or be silent, and in speech or silence find and give pleasure. Bonaparte had his feet on the sofa, his right hand along its back, his chin sunk on his breast. Duroc, at a sign from his master, had seated himself on a kind of stool or settee with gilt legs and brocaded top. At Schönbrunn as in the Tuileries the etiquette of the new French court, in spite of all De Remusat's efforts, was a blending of common sense and grotesque rigidity. Etiquette implies gross superstition and demands the sacrifice of time. How was the son of an attorney to see a sacred act in the unbuttoning of his chemise, or the victor of Austerlitz to find leisure for the six entrées which caricatured even human absurdity at the levée of Louis XIV.?

"Why do the Habsburgs crowd their houses with clocks? In their do-nothing empty hours, I should have thought they would have been glad to forget the waste and passage of time. The hobby is hereditary as the under-lip. At Madrid I found Joseph in a palace that ticked like a watchmaker's shop."

He laughed to himself, quietly, thinking suddenly of the pasty of watches which Charles V.'s cook presented the Emperor at Yuste.

"Poor old Joseph," Napoleon went on, "what an absurd figure he cuts in the Escurial! What an absurd figure he cuts in any position except that of a surveyor of taxes or a confidential clerk! There, however, he sits, with his crowned head, and his royal cares never cost him a sleepless hour. Wellington might throw a cordon of horse around the Escurial any night and capture le bon Joseph snoring

beside his Dulcinea. Think of his face and hers, Duroc, prisoners in their nightgowns in the English camps! And, morbleu, I should not miss him! It would be merely a queen's pawn or at worst a bishop off my chess-board."

Napoleon rubbed his white, fat little hands in glee, laughing immoderately at his own malice.

"But there is no danger," he went on. "Joseph may sleep sound. He was always a famous sleeper. Yes, I remember. After my father's death, though I was the younger, I had to act as the elder brother to the family; see to everything and everybody, the house, the mulberry patch, Louis, Jerome, Elisa, Pauline—mon Dieu, yes; and, I sometimes think, I have had to play the elder brother to the whole human race ever since. Before I was sixteen all my family was on my hands; before I was twenty-two, all Corsica; then all France; now all Europe, and to-morrow——"

Duroc saw the excitement return to Napoleon's face, and, remembering Corvisart's counsels, he became uneasy again. He himself needed rest. A hundred cares awaited him. The Grand Chamberlainship, his Carolingian office, was a little ridiculous, but the duties it involved were serious. That afternoon they had been made harassing by the absence of Raynouard, a brave amongst the brave, and by the sudden illness of the chamberlain of the day. Still, he reflected, Champagny or Liechtenstein might at any moment appear bringing the treaty for Napoleon's signature.

Napoleon, resuming his amicable pensive tones, interrupted his musings.

"We went to the same school at Ajaccio, Joseph and I; and as children we slept in the same bed, and night by night Joseph's head no sooner touched the pillow than off he went and never stirred till morning. I could have slept too, but I preferred to lie awake listening to the leaves or to the surf, working and scheming how to be top of the class tomorrow if I were not top to-day, studying my rivals, con-

ning my tasks, history, geography, arithmetic, French. Thirty-five years ago! Where were you then, Duroc?"

"In 1775, Sire? I was three years old, and at Luçon, I suppose. Anyhow, it was the year of Louis XVI.'s coronation. I remember the bonfires and the ringing of bells."

Napoleon jerked the words from his lips:

"And to-night—here we sit in the palace of the Cæsars, you and I, at that time two of the most insignificant little boys in all Europe . . ."

Duroc was about to protest.

"Here we sit, you a duke, I an emperor, in the palace of the Habsburgs—and we are at the same game still, each of us, a writhing knot of collégiens, struggling to get to the top of the class. Desaix is dead and Lannes, let out of school a little earlier. I ask no holiday and get no holiday. My generals and marshals come to me for leave of absence; but to whom am I to apply for leave of absence? Destiny and the inexorable nature of things—that is my superior officer. Yet I know a spot, Duroc, a valley above Bastia, full of wild flowers and shut in by rocks from the sea. There, if I were to imitate Charles V. or Diocletian, there I could still be happy. There in my garden of mulberry trees and vines I might have leisure at last to read *La Mécanique Céleste.*"

He seemed lost in recollection.

"You do not know that book, you others? It is a great book. Laplace sent it me exactly nine years ago last April; but it wants three consecutive months to read it, and I, I have never had three consecutive hours."

Napoleon pleased his own vanity, perhaps his just pride, by distinguishing himself from his officers, as well as from contemporary sovereigns, by the superiority and variety of his intellectual interests. If men like Johann Markowitz and Rentzdorf in Vienna or Gœthe at Erfurt, measured his

literary judgments and his scholarship, there were always characterless old fops like Haydn and Wieland, nature's valets, prepared to lackey the great man's "versatility."

"Yes, there I could read Laplace and write the history of my grenadiers. What a subject-matter! No one else will do them justice, for I alone understand them. We have stormed through our lives together. We have watered our horses in every river from the Nile to the Tagus, from the Baltic to the Sicilian Sea; and in the future . . . If I had but ten more years, Duroc . . . Nature meant me to be a writer of books," he said, abruptly reining in his thoughts. "It was my earliest ambition. It shall be my latest. I could still write dramas—if I had leisure. I confided the plot of one to Raynouard the other day."

The tone was or seemed to be inviting; but Duroc's face remained stony. He recollected Lauriston's description of the three hours' interview with Napoleon, walking up and down in front of his tent on the evening of the 5th July, the first day of Wagram. Perhaps, too, he feared lest Napoleon should at this dread hour confide to him, also, the plot of his unfinished tragedy.

Duroc was not destined to be bored for long. Napoleon had a surprise for him. Till now he had talked with his face partly in profile to Duroc; but now turning suddenly to face the latter, Napoleon, as though dismissing all these empty speculations, said with emphasis.

"But I have no son, Duroc."

Had he dropped a hand-grenade the explosion could not have startled Duroc more effectively than these six words; the most momentous state secret of the cabinets of Europe was ushered in for discussion.

"My interest in France is therefore a life-interest," Bonaparte went on. "It is precarious. The hazard of a bursting shell, a spent shot such as did for Lannes . . . Hence these conspiracies; yes and the present interminable

negotiations. If I am to paralyse the hopes of a royalist restoration I must have an heir."

"Sire, your Majesty's confidence moves me."

But to himself Duroc, all fatigue banished, put question on question. What was Napoleon's inmost purpose in this communication? The Emperor's face was serious, even sad; but it revealed nothing. Nevertheless, the communication could not be accidental. Of what new scheme of policy were these words the prelude? Duroc's mind hurried to the answer. He knew the alternate advances towards and retreats from a divorce during the past two years. A son had been born to Napoleon, and only recently Madame Walewska had become enceinte here at Schönbrunn. This had disproved one falsehood and removed one obstacle. He knew of the overtures to Alexander, foiled by the Czaritza's prompt intervention and the marriage of Alexander's sister to the Duke of Oldenburg. But like every member of the inner court circle he knew also of the persistent rumour of a secret clause in the present negotiations, demanding for Napoleon the hand of an archduchess. This demand, it was said, had first been made in a manner highly dramatic or melodramatic. During one of his hunting expeditions the Emperor attended only by Rustum, had entered a forester's hut. A distinguished-looking stranger had entered almost at the same moment, and there, it was said, Napoleon's demand had first been made. For the stranger was the Archduke Charles.

"What is he up to now?" thought Duroc, and every semblance of friendship vanished. He became an adversary watching an adversary's moves. Nothing was in his mind but a vague hostility to Bonaparte's tortuous methods, methods excused so often by such phrases as—"It is in the blood, he cannot help himself. He is a Corsican." Centuries of private justice or private vengeance have made it a second nature in the race to mistrust the straight road,

to leave even your friends in ignorance of your true designs.

Napoleon, as though he had forgotten his minister, but had not forgotten his own ideas, said pensively:

"My family might be an incalculable aid to me but my family is one of my greatest chagrins. They owe everything to me, and what story of sudden fortune in the *Arabian Nights* surpasses or equals the fortunes of my brothers and sisters? Yet they have no gratitude. My brothers conspire against me openly, my sisters intrigue in secret, Lucien, the ablest, defies me. He has abjured France, and when last I heard of him he was in England—in England, Duroc, my deadliest, most malignant enemy! And why, ye gods? Because he rendered me a service on Brumaire, and, his head swollen with vanity, he imagined that by his aid also I had won my victories. And now, instead of taking part with me in the greatest epic action of all time, he moons about like a discontented school-usher, writing lame alexandrines on Charlemagne. Charlemagne! What has he to do with Charlemagne, dead exactly a thousand years ago, when I am living and here? And what has he, my brother to do with the writing of epics when he might be living one every hour of every day? And the others are as absurd, destitute of common sense even in the pursuit of their egoism. I know the things that imbecile Joseph says of me. I made him King of Spain; but he would raise Spain against me and join Wellington to-morrow—if Wellington would leave him king! And the fool cannot even beget a son to succeed me—nothing but daughters! And Jerome, mon Dieu, Jerome! Westphalia is the youngest kingdom in Europe, but it has every vice that disfigures the oldest. Jerome was yesterday starving in the streets of Marseilles, yet he campaigns with a larger retinue of harlots and bandboxes than ever followed a Bourbon to disaster. How would your ideologues reconcile these con-

tradictions with Montesquiou? As for Louis—that is the bitterest. Louis, for whom at Valence I denied myself everything, keeping both of us on my lieutenant's pay. What privations! I never set foot in a café, I brushed my own uniform that it might last longer. This for his sake who now does everything he can to thwart me and justify the vilest calumnies of my enemies. But let me not speak of him. You know, Duroc, you know how well he succeeds in making her life a burden to the good, beautiful woman he has married. Ah, why did you permit it? Why did you make it necessary?"

Duroc looked and felt extremely uncomfortable. Napoleon was alluding to Hortense Beauharnais. Ten years ago she had had a girl's infatuation for Duroc himself; but at that time no man suspected the coming Cæsarism, and despite Bonaparte's advice Duroc had refused Josephine's daughter, and marrying Elmira d'Atchez, the heiress of a Spanish banker, he had found with her a domestic misery as great as Hortense's with Louis.

"And my sisters!" Napoleon said again, but this time with good-humoured sarcasm. "My sisters! Well, Pauline has a heart of a sort. She asks for nothing but a few thousands a year—and in her conduct, well, the princesses of the old régime have set her an example that she imitates too successfully. She leaves me alone. Would to God I could say that of the other two! But I tell you, Duroc, if I discovered to-morrow that Caroline my youngest and once my favourite sister, if I heard that she had taken this fanatic into her embraces and in the act placed this dagger in his hand, whispering, "For my brother's breast; be bloody, bold, and resolute!"—I could not, I swear, repudiate the allegation. She has done things as hideous. Metternich circulated the epigram that Caroline had the head of Cromwell on the loveliest shoulders in Italy. Such fatuities are worthy of a diplomatic profoundeur; but she is heartless; has

infinite ingenuity; she is ambitious and grasping beyond belief. Still, I have a kind of regard for her; there is character in her evil. But Elisa, the living parody of myself, whom I rescued from St. Cyr on the very day of the prison massacres! Her I find unendurable. I never see her, and, unless I am compelled, I never write to her. She is Joseph's sister, not mine; worse I cannot say of *her*. Tuscany has neither military nor political significance, but the Semiramis of Lucca will have a court which apes the Tuileries and, since it cannot have military brilliance, it must, if you please, have literary lustre. And, mon Dieu, what a crew! Every man whom I have banished from France or forbidden to live in Paris finds hospitality with my sister—Fontanes, De Staël, Récamier, La Harpe, Boufflers, Chateaubriand, who since his return from the East has more than ever the hang-dog look of a conspirator who has just come out of the chimney, and her latest triumph, that fiddler Paganini, who must have brought his devil's skill from the devil only. My sisters!"

He took snuff, sneezed heartily, and began to walk up and down.

"Had Alexander a brother? Or Cæsar sisters?" Napoleon demanded abruptly and stopped in his walk, glancing back sideways over his shoulder at Duroc.

The latter hesitated, then answered in some embarrassment:

"Sire, I do not know. I have forgotten my ancient history, and my duties to your Majesty leave me little time for reading. Daru could tell us."

"Cæsar, I think, had no sisters. He had a daughter, married to Pompey."

Napoleon broke off, and spat on the floor, and, as if by that symbolical act he had rid his mind of all his relatives, he stopped in front of a mirror and began to examine his features.

The duc de Friuli, seeing Napoleon thus absorbed, thought this a favourable occasion for him to spit also. Accordingly he rose and in the Versailles manner spat, not on the carpet, but in a corner of the room, then sat down again and looked at his master.

VIII

The latter was still examining himself in front of the mirror. Evidently the results were not satisfying, for with a discontented grimace Napoleon looked at his hands; they were small, well-made, white, and plump, but the finger-nails were long and unpleasant-looking, and a dirty-ish yellow in colour.

He began to walk up and down, still in the proximity of the mirror.

"Since Constant showed me how to shave myself," he observed at length, "I have never felt clean. Is it a sign of age or ill-health when the beard pushes so rapidly?"

"I should say it was a sign of vigorous health, your Majesty."

Duroc was not the dupe of the question about shaving. There was something else in the Emperor's mind.

Napoleon had again returned to the mirror and resumed the contemplation of his face and figure.

There was no resisting the impression, he reflected; the notion during his stay at Schönbrunn had occurred to him obstinately. In other years, say from the days of Arcola to those of Marengo, even to those of Austerlitz, that is, from his twenty-fifth to his thirty-fifth years, it had been his mother's face which invariably started forward to meet him in a mirror, a Corsican face, lean, bony, aquiline, almost haggard, but possessing its own beauty, lit up by a burning energy, dominated by the brow, the very throne of intellect, and an intent, scrutinizing, almost terri-

ble gaze. Now, however, it was no longer that face which started to meet him, but another face, indolent-looking, round, overlaid with fat, unattractive, the forehead a meaningless lump of flesh, and in the eyes no longer the ardent intensity of gaze but a look like that of a vicious horse. It was his father's face. Recently also he had to his surprise rediscovered in himself his father's tastes and his father's habits. His father's maladies had plagued him long since.

"Talleyrand is right. The club-foot is blind to greatness, but he has insight into corruption. In the dregs of existence the highest genius finds its level."

Bonaparte had no doubts in his own mind about the superiority of what is usually styled "glory" to what is usually styled "love"; but he was not less certain that real love and real glory are exceedingly rare. In his own life he had only experienced real love once; he was not convinced that he had ever aroused it in any woman. He asseverated indeed, "I have conquered hearts as well as kingdoms"; but he was always a little ashamed of his own effrontery. It kindled the same embarrassment as the embarrassment when he, the Corsican attorney's son spoke or wrote in the style of the French kings of "mon peuple."

"But now? This eighteen-year-old girl? What are my chances?"

He was not a man to linger over suppositions. Assuredly, he told himself, looking at the reflection in the glass, there was little in that stumpy figure, those legs that waddled under the shaking fat, that huge head set low on the powerful shoulders, and that dwarf-like enormity of chest—there was little in all this to attract the candid eyes of a young girl. Yet it was just this attraction that mattered; maturity created for itself illusions of various kinds—rank, great power, genius, wealth—but once within four walls, tête-à-tête with a young girl, a great soldier, after the first

fifteen minutes, lost the aureole of his victories, an emperor that of power, and a young girl's glance became more disconcerting than the bristling gleam of ten thousand spears, and the manœuvring of three hundred thousand men on a battlefield a slight task compared with that of banishing the look of boredom or vexation from her eyes.

Suddenly Napoleon threw off his disguise. In Napoleon's character, the impatience which made it intolerable for him to be on his guard against assassination sprang from the same root as the headstrong outspokenness which again and again made him disclose secrets in conversation. His immense power saved him from the consequences of these indiscretions; but in a weaker man they would have been counted defects. Flatterers or dupes have even attributed them to calculation and a superior cunning.

Even in his frankness, however, Napoleon revealed his mind in his own way. He made no formal exposition; he simply began to "think aloud," permitting Duroc to overhear his thoughts.

"Indeed it is hazardous for a man of my age to marry a girl of eighteen. Such a wife expects you to dance to one tune only, to understand her whims which she neither understands nor attempts to understand herself. Soldiers have not the time. What a frightful fate is Marmont's! He was as a son to me and I tried to save him from that marriage. Yes, soldiers ought only to marry women of a certain character and a certain age, as Davout did years ago and as Augereau has just done. Women of thirty, sedate in temper, make the ideal soldiers' wives. But a child of seventeen, Duroc?"

Duroc had the distinct impression that Napoleon wished to be contradicted; that he was stating the case at its worst in order to refute it. He knew the two marriages. Marshal Davout, duc d'Auerstadt, afterwards prince

d'Eckmühl, had in 1803 married Rose Leclerc, sister of Pauline Bonaparte's first husband. The ménage was everywhere famous as the happiest in the French army. Augereau, duc de Castiglione, in his turbulent, half-piratical youth had married a beautiful Spaniard; but he had long been a widower and a few months ago had married again.

"If it is hazardous in a soldier," Napoleon went on, "how much more hazardous in a soldier who is also the ruler of a great empire? I have a myriad anxieties; can seldom be alone; am exposed at any moment to start on a compaign—it is to court disaster!"

With an air of dejection Napoleon flung himself on the sofa again and in low friendly tones continued:

"If Josephine could have had a son, old comrade, how simple and beautiful it all would have been. For, despite everything, I love that woman. Mon Dieu, only six days ago, at a vile story in the English press, I was about to start for Strassburg, torn with rage and longing. Yes, I love her. But a childless marriage is no marriage. How can there be a 'home' without the laughter of children? Josephine knows this and is unhappy, and I know that she knows this and I am wretched as she is wretched. But my work for France is only half completed if I leave the nation no security; if my death is to kindle civil war and again let loose the Terror. Yet how am I now to secure that stability, except by grafting the new dynasty upon a firmly-rooted stock? General Bonaparte could choose where he would. Napoleon I. is no longer free. Cruel dilemma! To repudiate the woman who better than any other understands my character; to take to my breast an inexperienced girl, the daughter of an old, corrupt, and haughty house, nurtured amid curses on my name, her father the monarch I have most deeply injured, numbering amongst her immediate kindred Marie Antoinette, whom I am supposed to

have beheaded, and Marie Caroline, whom I have certainly dethroned. What an abyss covered with flowers! It is a moving darkness only . . . yet it is in my fate . . ."

Doubt vanished from Duroc's mind. Napoleon had resolved to marry the archduchess.

Marie Louise was not beautiful, but at eighteen her face had a definite charm, a union of artlessness and perversity not infrequent in girls who have been trained in convents. She was tall; her figure was shapely. Her sensual mouth curved upwards at the corners in a way which gave it a striking resemblance to the mouth of Pauline Borghese; but she had beautiful ears, small and finely whorled. Pauline's were flat, "the ears of a monkey on the head of an angel," and therefore hidden always by bandelettes. To suppose that Bonaparte was uninfluenced by the high birth and sensuous charm of the archduchess is to take the thing that is not for the thing that is. There was still a remnant of Lucien de Rubempré in the all-adventurer, the all-conquerer. To the Emperor the Habsburg marriage was not more dazzling than had been the Beauharnais marriage to the general; but it was as dazzling.

Duroc's mind, working in these directions, listening to the profound silences, was suddenly traversed by a bizarre idea. Was it credible that in the selection of *Romeo and Juliet* Napoleon had intended to suggest in the feud of the Montagues and Capulets the evils that might result from the feud of the Bonapartes and Habsburgs? On momentous occasions Napoleon did nothing without intention. At Erfurt, as Duroc very well knew, every play staged by Dazincourt, Denon's predecessor, had been selected by the Emperor; he knew very well that *Athalie* had been rejected lest it should prompt some German Joash; that *Mithridate* had been selected because the Pontic king's unyielding hatred of Rome portrayed Bonaparte's unyield-

ing hatred of England; that *Mohamet* similarly had been chosen because of the famous verses—

> "Les mortels sont égaux, ce n'est point la naissance,
> C'est la seule vertu qui fait la différence.
> Il est de ces esprits favorisés des cieux
> Qui sont tout par eux-mêmes et rien par leurs aieux."

He knew that imperial orders had even been given to the actors and actresses—Talma, Lafon, Saint Prix, and mesdemoiselles Gros, Duchesnois, Patrat, and Rose Depuys—to pronounce certain passages applicable to Napoleon with unusual solemnity and emphasis.

Nevertheless, Duroc felt that a direct allusion to the play of to-night or an overt comparison of Napoleon to Romeo would at once shock the Emperor's sense and good taste. He therefore said tentatively:

"Sire, your Majesty is still the youngest monarch in Europe——"

"The Czar is eight years younger," Napoleon interjected curtly. "Yet I would know happiness, Duroc. I have had enough of glory; I would know domestic happiness, old comrade—if at nine and thirty happiness is still possible to man."

Inadvertently Napoleon had made himself a year younger than he was generally supposed to be. Duroc observed this and drew his own inferences, but said nothing.

"My talk with M. Goethe at Erfurt made me read *Werther* again. There you have youthful love drawn by a master hand. Those others, they do not know what youthful love means. They have never felt it, how then can they depict it? Look at that piece to-night. Nothing could be more untrue to nature, nothing more loutish and unclean. How can an Italian like Zingarelli, the countryman of Petrarch and Tasso, permit that buffoon Shakespeare thus to sully, thus to disfigure the most sacred of our senti-

ments? But a nation like England, dead to political honour, is dead also to sensibility and to moral honour."

Rancour had returned to his voice, but in a lighter tone he resumed:

"Eh bien, in this play, Juliet is an innocent girl of fifteen or sixteen. What are her ideas and her language upon love? They are the ideas and language of a street-walker! Are English girls indeed like this? We have the authority of the greatest English poet and the applause of the British mob to testify that this is their character. But the whole race is demi-savage still, and I had no more compunction in arresting ten thousand of them at the rupture of the Peace of Amiens than I would have had in arresting the ten thousand Cossacks who cut off the ears and noses of their prisoners at Austerlitz. Outside science, what writer of refinement except Richardson has England produced?"

Duroc mentioned Ossian. For in 1809, in Vienna as in Dresden and Paris, Fingal and Temora were still the vogue and at the baptismal font gave names to a generation of Malvines and Oscars.

Napoleon's answer was categoric.

"Ossian is not an Englishman: he is a Gael. If Ossian had written in French I would have made him a prince. But your Shakespeare," he said with a brusque laugh, "I would have made him a groom. His ideas reek of the stables."

And to Duroc's astonishment, for during the performance the Emperor for the most part had appeared listless or half-asleep, Napoleon cited two of Juliet's speeches to prove the coarseness or brutishness of Shakespeare's mind.

The criticism was just. Duroc could not defend the excerpts.

"It is English, your Majesty," he said with a shrug. "The women of that nation drink beer and brandy. My cousin, M. le comte d'Herisson, has lived amongst them."

"Yes, but why has Zingarelli reprinted the outrage?

Youth is the age of noble illusions. Each day a new world of enchantment opens before the mind. He who destroys this enchantment is an enemy of the human race. And youthful love—how beautiful it is, Duroc! Ethereal, flying everything gross, standing at the holiest distances from its adoration. Its existence is that of the phœnix. It lives for days upon a smile. A word transports it to the highest heaven, drives it into solitude, to devour in jealous seclusion the memory of its own bliss."

Napoleon's face had become extraordinary in its mobility; letting himself go, his countenance, his eyes, his lips, expressed every nuance of the emotions which rapt him—anger, *tendresse*, exaltation, reverie, scorn, the blackness of hate. Duroc thought of those watches whose glass faces reveal the works.

"Even *Werther* sometimes errs in this respect. Goethe promised me to amend the paragraphs. I am told that *Werther* is laughed at in England? The savages in New Caledonia would laugh at it also. The women are all Juliets there! Youthful love!"

He spoke a woman's name. Duroc could not hear it distinctly.

Napoleon walked twice across the room, sunk in reverie, then said:

"We knew together, she and I, the true, the hallowed sentiment. And what was our sanctifying hour, uplifting us to the crystal heaven of felicity? I will tell you, old comrade, for I live it now, and it is twenty-four years ago. It was a morning in June. We were sitting in an arbour. The summer dew was still on the grass. I could see each print her light foot had made on the silver lace across the lawn. The murmur of bees was around, and the scent of myrtle and syringa was in the air. Once a butterfly settled near her hand. I too could have mistaken that hand for a flower. Time fled, struggling with our heart-beats in speed.

The sun climbed, touching first her hair, then the damask of her cheek. We scarcely spoke, but sitting a little way apart, we now and then ate a cherry from the same branch. And my ambition then, Duroc? The ravening ambition that Europe now curses? My ambition was to die young, to die unknown, wept only by her."

Duroc shifted uneasily in his chair. He was embarrassed; he was "out of it." He felt like Sancho Panza listening to some high-pitched harangue of Don Quixote. He had no memories of this kind. He had never sat beside his maiden and in still rapture eaten cherries from the same branch. He saw that it would be fatuous to ask for explanations, still more fatuous to murmur assent. Therefore he said nothing, but sat with a military precision, attentive.

A swift change in the Emperor's demeanour relieved him.

"Now," Napoleon resumed, "I shall die old; diseased and used up, and go down like a ship amid the roarings of a tempest that is the execration of a world! But Austria shall accept my terms or I will grind it to powder under my heel. I have been at Schönbrunn four months. I have dwelt much upon the past, pondering the future. Strange ideas have come to me. What is past, present, and future to men such as I am? A chaos out of which we hew colossal shapes. I am only in part the result of my environment. I should have achieved greatness had the Bastille never fallen, had the Bourbon monarchy still stood. For I have integrated my ideals," he went on, with an abrupt diversion of manner and employing an energetic metaphor derived from his early studies of d'Alembert and the higher mathematics, "Unlike the eagle which sheds its beak, I have conserved every rôle, metamorphosed indeed, but vital in me and vitalizing still. I began as a royalist officer and an Ajaccian patriot. But Corsica was small; France was no mother-country of mine, but France was great, and, at that hour, bleeding to death. I resolved to save France and on Vendémiaire

and at Rivoli I set her above danger. But I could not rest. My fate drove me onwards. Other men have luck—Marmont, Ney, Junot, Masséna. Such good fortune is unstable and exterior; but my fate is from within, present and resistless. It watches whilst I sleep; and whilst I am absent in thought or dull, it brings my plans to a glorious issue. Thus I entered Egypt a soldier, but returned the Man of Destiny. I legislated for Europe. I made myself Emperor, still integrating my ideals; for royalist officer, Corsican insurgent, Jacobin commander-in-chief, Man of Destiny, legislator and emperor—I am them all. But now? I nowhere see the end, and I might as well attempt to stay a planet with my finger as seek to check the onward-rushing of my fate."

"At Göttingen," Napoleon resumed, after a brief silence, "and at Berlin, the professors style me the modern Attila, Genghis, Timour, que scais-je? Let them beware lest I become the thing they name! Something in me here——"

He touched his breast.

"Something here is at work. Nothing shakes my forebodings. My enemies may force on me an unheard-of rôle. Others before me have written out their life-hate in ink; I will write mine in blood. The world reads their satires and trembles. Mine shall strike them with madness."

"God forbid, your Majesty." Duroc broke in vehemently. "This shall never be. You are the instrument of Providence, Sire."

"God? Providence?" Napoleon sharply interrupted with a shrug and a sidelong look at his minister. "I get on very well without those fantasies—ces idées-là. What is it you intend by that word 'God,' you others? Hein? Let us talk of *that* a little."

Sitting down, he looked at Duroc in sardonic curiosity.

"Your Majesty, I did not of course mean——"

To Duroc, the feast to the Supreme Being had represented, under all its travesty, a living idea. He found it, however, singularly difficult to express to Napoleon in what way he regarded him as the instrument of Providence.

"We use the word 'God' so glibly," Napoleon said pensively. "I am not guiltless on that count myself—in my public utterances, for example, or when I write to my bishops or to that old fox Pius VII., or to that imbecile Fesch, my step-uncle, whom I have just made Archbishop of Lyons. But to-night, Duroc, at this dead hour, what is that word between you and me? The occasions when it is worth while speaking the truth are rare; the men capable of understanding it are rarer, and rarest of all are the men whom one respects enough to speak the truth to them. God, we say, is not this table, this sofa, not that forest, nor those mountains, not the stars nor yet the ether, not you, nor Rustum, nor Josephine, nor I. He is not even William Pitt. Enfin, what is He? He is the Absolute, these German ideologues affirm, the Infinite, the Unchanging, the Unconditioned. All 'nots,' row on row of negatives! In fact, if we are to believe the religions and the philosophies, He is everything—except everything that is! I should look upon myself as an idiot, if in my negotiations with Austria I swerved a hair's-breadth to right or left for such chimeras. As for God's so-called omnipotence —I could in ten minutes conceive ten more perfect universes. No, Monge and Lagrange are right. Matter is its own explanation, its own reason, its own cause, its own final end, its own destiny in a word—as I am."

"I cling to immortality, Sire—to a meeting au-delà, in the hereafter."

"With whom?" was the startling answer. "Your wife?"

Duroc laughed awkwardly, and in his awkwardness said a cruel word which was not spoken before it was regretted:

"Lannes, perhaps."

"Ah!"

Deeply agitated, Napoleon struggled to speak, half rose, sank back—tearing at the arm of the sofa.

Duroc had touched too raw a wound.

"Yes," Napoleon said with a heavy sigh, "I should like to meet Lannes again—for a short time; but not forever, not even Lannes. And would he be glad to meet me at all, Duroc? Would he be glad to see the man for whom he died, Duroc?"

Duroc observed that the hand which was tearing at the embroidery had begun to tremble.

"Lannes? Lannes? Not glad to see you, Sire? I know he would be, your Majesty."

"As for that seeing of God face to face," Napoleon went on, caught in the meshes of his first idea, and always eager to reason against any unreason, "to what end? I ask myself. What are we to do when we have once seen Him? And what are we to think of a God who for a thousand million years will make Himself a gazing-stock to His creatures? I have had the stare of men for ten years and already I begin to be a little sick of it."

There was an abrupt silence.

"It is late, old comrade," Napoleon said, stifling a yawn. "We both need sleep."

Duroc got up at once.

"Sire, I wish your Majesty a refreshing night."

"Remain!"

It was the Emperor, not the "old comrade," who spoke that command.

Duroc came back.

"Who presides at the court-martial to-morrow?"

"What court-martial, your Majesty?"

Duroc's mind in the whirl of immense problems of State and thought had drifted far indeed from the obscure German

boy who that morning had so nearly placed his name, not beside the hideous glory of Ravaillac, but within the immortal splendour which falls on the names of Brutus and of Tell.

"Have you forgotten? The court-martial which tries that madman."

The minister hesitated. He knew very well that the court-martial, its members, and its president, would be selected by one man only; he knew also that the judicial form and procedure, the witnesses to be summoned, the judges, the place, the hour, the sentence, and the manner of its execution, would be determined by that same man; but in a second he perceived that, as in the cases of d'Enghien and Palm, Napoleon wished to remain in the background.

"The duc de Rovigo, Sire," he answered at length, "or General Hulin."

Napoleon's face remained unmoved.

Savary? Hulin?

The names were ominous.

Hulin had presided over the midnight tribunal which condemned the Duc d'Enghien, and throughout the sinister scene Savary had stood behind the president's chair, affecting the judges, affecting the scanty spectators, like a portentous shadow of the implacable watcher in the Tuileries, waiting whilst the crime moved to its consummation.

Napoleon's face betrayed nothing of his thoughts.

"The duc de Rovigo—General Hulin," he said at length, with an ambiguous glance at Duroc; "Mais oui."

But detaining Duroc by a mere attitude rather than by a gesture, Napoleon said again:

"See the prisoner yourself. Savary's patibulary countenance terrifies the unexperienced. Rapp is honest but obtuse. You, on the other hand, have sensibility; you have finesse. Reason with him; speak to him of his father and mother, of the books he reads, his hopes, his sweetheart.

Get him to confide in you. Has he accomplices in Paris, in Vienna, or anywhere? Upon that head I am not satisfied. I must know all."

In an altered voice he added:

"It is as easy for me to kill this boy as it is to speak the word. Yet to-night, I am perplexed, drawn this way and that by more conflicting purposes, by more intricate speculations than the night before a battle. Yet he too must fulfil his destiny. He has elected himself my antagonist. Who knows? For him this is perhaps the greatest. Death is never the worst of evils."

"It is the goodness of your heart that makes you pause, Sire. I will see the prisoner, but I think we shall discover nothing."

"My heart has nothing to do with this," Napoleon answered drily. "It is my reason; it is my will. I consider what is wisest and most auspicious for this subtle war which to-day my enemies have unmasked. That is all. They are poisoning the wells. It is a dangerous device even in war."

Duroc, as Napoleon had just said of him, had sensibility and kindness, but to-night, all seemed as nothing beside the drama and mighty purposes of which he had been made the spectator and the confidant. The assassin's guilt was manifest. After so heinous an attempt, what was the death of an obscure German lad? His blood would scarcely stain more of mother-earth than a mouse's. To hesitate? It was as though, in some onset of irreflective pity, one were to hesitate to kill a tiny but noxious insect. Let the God who made such insects take care of them.

CHAPTER IX

THE MASKED BALL

I

MEANWHILE, in Vienna itself, within the old palace of the Habsburgs, the masked ball organized by Count Andréossy continued its course. At midnight it was already crowded, and the guests had increased rather than diminished in numbers as the night wore on. They now included several of the greatest names in Vienna.

Vienna, even in captivity, was still the centre of European elegance and of the arts. Men and women in her public assemblies had the consciousness that higher than this spot none could look; that towards Vienna and her fêtes all other cities looked—Petersburg, Berlin, Paris, London.

Andréossy, as governor of Vienna, had devised this ball, and its success pleased his vanity. He had always been a *persona grata* in Viennese society of the first rank; he now heard or overheard his "amiability" celebrated; he heard or overheard such assertions as—"After all, Andréossy is a gentleman; whilst Murat or Hulin or Bernadotte—" (former governors or ambassadors) "Well, from such mushrooms what except mushroom manners could one expect?" The ball, in addition to this sop to his vanity, scored for Andréossy a political victory over his rival, Maret. The latter had remained the journalist he was when Napoleon in 1799 "discovered" his powers and won his limitless if indis-

creet devotion. He had still the journalist's eye for a sensation, however coarse or compromising, and when in the negotiations with Liechtenstein there occurred the ominous hitch of September 22nd, he urged his master, by the seizure of the commander-in-chief of the Austrian army, to force Francis II. to his knees. Napoleon refused point-blank but he did not intervene when Maret, in the presence of the Austrian envoys, insinuated blusteringly—If the Austrian commander had not come to Vienna as a hostage, why then had he come at all?

Andréossy, annoyed by Maret's grossness, had derided his plan.

"Detain the ambassadors," he said to Napoleon. "It is what Austria and your enemies wait for, Sire. A hundred Palafoxes will start from the ranks of Germany; Hungary will become an armed camp; and in every fortress we shall have a siege of Saragossa."

As a means of allaying the uneasiness that the indiscretions of the old rédacteur of the *Moniteur* had created, Andréossy proposed his own plan. Let the requisitions and house-to-house searches, he urged, be relaxed or suspended; let the great families, by a feeling of security, be enticed back to the capital, and the belief in an immediate signature of the treaty be encouraged; above all let Napoleon's plans for paralyzing Austria's issue of paper money be kept the most rigorous secret. Francis II.'s vacillating amiability, his naïve pleasure in hearing himself styled "the Father of his people," would then make it certain, Andréossy argued, that he would accept Napoleon's terms; for he would never have the resolution to face the city's and the nation's disappointment.

Andréossy, by this counsel, had done, he considered, a real service to Napoleon and a service that he alone could have rendered.

The first part of the scheme had been a success. During

the following weeks numbers of the smaller nobility and several of the greater families had returned to the capital. The peace became a foregone conclusion. The date and terms, it was understood, alone were in dubiety.

In his project of a court ball, Andréossy encountered greater difficulties. He was, it is true, the temporary master of the Hofburg, the Imperial palace in the heart of the city, as Napoleon was the master of Schönbrunn, the Imperial palace outside the walls, and, as master of his palace, he might issue what invitations he pleased. But how was he to induce the Viennese to accept those invitations? What Austrian would attend a banquet or a dance in the royal palace when the master of that palace was in exile at Totis, a hundred and twenty miles away?

"We shall see," Andréossy thought with a shrug.

The situation by its very niceness attracted him. It gave him the opportunity of displaying just that social tact which neither Napoleon nor any man in his suite possessed.

He had set to work at once. As a preliminary he had had the hospital for the wounded in the Hofgarten removed. Two regiments quartered till now in the precincts were moved to the Leopoldstadt. Finally, as by an oversight, a large portion of the Imperial plate was restored to the treasury.

Andréossy then proposed of himself that an Austrian committee should be nominated; that this committee, having secured the approval of Totis, should control every invitation, subject only to Andréossy's scrutiny—"a mere formality."

"After all, it is no longer a secret," he said gaily to Stürmer. "Vienna is not empty if you are in it. How are you all to pass the time? The wines, if not plentiful, will be, like the ladies, of the very first quality. And what else matters?"

At Vienna, as at Buda, boredom had reached its height.

Was a banquet or a dance at the palace, it was asked, any greater scandal than the archbishop of Vienna and the heads of the religious orders assembling in St. Stephen's two months ago to celebrate the Corsican's birthday?

The Emperor Francis II. gave his consent and that consent was a command. Neither Nugent nor Count O'Reilly nor Metternich had said a word in opposition. Metternich, indeed, twenty years afterwards, claimed as usual that in Andréossy's banquet he had "foreseen" Napoleon's design; but in no contemporary record or gossip is there a trace of this foresight.

The Austrian committee, probably with Andréossy's connivance, secured an initial victory. It decreed that, whether the peace were signed or not signed, the ball on the 13th October should not be a court ball, *Hofball*, but simply a "ball at the court," *Ball bei hof;* and that it should take place, not in the Redoutensaal, built by Charles VI., the father of Maria Theresa, but in the Rittersaal, constructed a few years previously by Francis II. himself; that the invited guests should be only the élite of Austrian society or such representatives of "foreign nations" as had the necessary number of quarterings.

This decree ruled out as "undesirables" nearly every outstanding name in Napoleon's *entourage.* Marshals and generals, dukes, princes, counts, and barons, members of the Legion of Honour, members of the Senate and Corps Legislatif, were erased pell-mell amid the guttural or crystalline laughter of Viennese ladies of fashion.

"Parvenus to a man, ma chérie!"

On Wednesday, the 11th October, a whisper went the round of the city that Napoleon himself had been "blackballed"—"English clubs" were becoming a fashion in Vienna as in Petersburg. A sting was added to the jest by the postscript that the committee had arrived at this decision very unwillingly; for, by the marriage of his stepson,

the "black-boulé" was connected with the great House of Wittelsbach!

It was imbecile; it was childish; yet for the moment it pleased Vienna. It seemed the revenge of the old régime, here in Marie Antoinette's early home, amid the society that had never ceased to resent her martyrdom. "You may insult, imprison, impoverish, or guillotine us," it seemed to say, "but you cannot become one of us. You are brave soldiers, but you are of another caste than ours; you are parvenus, that is, pariahs."

To some of the French it was simply puzzling; to many it was annoying; to others galling; but the fact was incontrovertible.

With the marshals and generals who chose to be affronted, and still more with such of their wives as had come to Vienna, Andréossy had need of all his boasted tact and social diplomacy.

"Que voulez-vous? It is a Viennese affair," he said suavely, his hands thrown wide, his broad smooth countenance wreathed in deprecatory smiles. "Poor devils! Pride in birth is their fetish; ours is glory. In Paris, beauty or wit is a woman's passport to good society; but in Vienna? It is fifteen quarterings, three lovers, and thirty thousand a year!"

More perspicacious observers amongst the French themselves, men like Favrol and Latour-Maubourg, made the comment that glory was no longer the prerogative of the Revolutionary armies; that those same Austrians who, in Andréossy's phrase, still worshipped the obsolete feudal fetishes, claimed Aspern-Essling as a victory and Wagram as "a drawn battle."

Napoleon himself was not displeased. His malice was piqued. It brought home to his officers, these marshals, dukes, counts, and generals, their dependence on himself; he had made them; this was a rebuff to their ingratitude and their eagerness to forget their creator.

The riot at the Opera had, on the very night of the ball, caused Andréossy some alarm; but long before midnight that alarm was dissipated.

His fête was a complete triumph.

II

Rentzdorf and Amalie had remained together in her rooms in the Palazzo Esterthal to the latest possible hour.

They had heard the heavy notes of St. Stephen's strike midnight. Now it was striking two.

"You must go," she said reluctantly. "Already to-night is to-morrow."

It had been arranged that when they separated she was to drive straight to the Rittersaal, he to cross Vienna and, using his privilege as an unmarried officer, put on civilian clothes, and rejoin her an hour and a half later for the end of the court ball.

"Unless——" she now said, as she released her lover.

"The guet-apens of Vienna come after that of Bayonne?" Rentzdorf said moodily. "No; it is unthinkable. There is a limit to Bonaparte's treachery. I shall see you in an hour."

The words which Amalie had suppressed were the words, "Unless—there is war, and, as a preliminary, Liechtenstein, you, and every other officer of his suite are made prisoners."

"What did that riot at the Opera portend?" she asked, walking to and fro in the odorous dusk of her room.

"Nothing. I saw it begin and saw it end. It was the usual strawfire; Gallic effervescence. Dearest, I am perfectly safe."

Rentzdorf spoke more confidently than he felt. He loathed Metternich's insinuations of contemplated foul play; the hero in himself responded to the hero in Bonaparte; he knew his essential greatness, but he knew also the

temptation of Liechtenstein's presence in Vienna. The Habsburg commander-in-chief, the greatest cavalry leader of Austria, was in the enemy's camp.

Silent, he walked beside her to and fro in this room, listening to the vast stillness of night or to the imperceptible murmur of the trees; "her trees" he called them, hers, for day by day, week by week, in summer's luxuriance or in winter's disarray, her eyes at dawn rested on their foliage or their stems.

To Rentzdorf nothing could dim the sanctitude nor lessen the seduction of Amalie's chamber—those carpets, which, like Calypso in her grotto, smelling of amaranth and lilies, she trod night by night in unembarrassed nakedness; that furniture, those cabinets, those vases and ornaments. Incensed by her breathing, this square of space had grown, like a dress she had worn, a mystic extension of her person and of her life.

"Is it not frightful, Heinrich? You and I, born into this era; our entire life maledict by war."

Shuddering, she drew him closer to her side.

"Be patient with me," she said in a beseeching yet steady voice. "I am made of fears to-night. This bliss has been too great. The death-thirst, born of the highest life-thirst, God's death-thirst mine, yours, do I not know it now, Heinrich, do I not know it now?"

She leaned her face on his shoulder. The modelling of her shoulders, the curve of her neck, that beauty in every part of her, each part a wonder in itself, heightened by its relation to the symmetry and wonder of her whole body, wrought on him its terrible seduction, starting in his mind that question formulated long ago,—"God destroys this, in world on world, irreparably—what must then be the anguish of God? I who know my own anguish, what can I know of His?"

He made an involuntary movement.

"Do not go yet," she pleaded, misinterpreting the gesture, and with a swift look into his face she drew him gently to the window and leaned beside him out into the night.

At first all was formless indistinctness—masses of trees and beyond the trees a blackness even more substantial that might be houses and fortifications, might be sepulchres. And to her over-wrought imagination the chaos of gloom prolonged itself unendingly. Darkness was not merely the dead earth's shadow, but the symbol of some profounder blackness, wide as nature itself and the beginning of things.

"And down there," she said sombrely, looking towards the bastion which, as their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, outlined itself on their right, "two men sit who move your fate and my fate as they will; to-morrow peace, or to-morrow war."

"They have no such authority, Amalie. This that we know, this that we are, this that living we shall be, what power outside itself can touch or change it, Amalie?"

Silent, he stood beside her silent, her white resplendent arms and beautiful clasped hands emerging from the fringing lace of her sleeves. In the garden below the stillness and rest were so extreme that the leaves that fell in clusters by day had now ceased to fall. The trees were visible thrones of slumber. The scents of the shrubs, of the rose-beds and heliotrope, already fading and blackening, came in a tide of morbid sweetness, mixing with the incense of her shoulders and of her hair.

"Dearest," she said suddenly, "dearest; listen—oh, listen!"

Above the darkness of the garden rose a faint prolonged call; then another and another; then, most spectral-like, detaching itself from a sycamore, an owl glided in the direction of the sombre heavy masses westward.

"They come here from the Wiener wood?" he asked.

"Not always; in early winter when hunger drives them. I never hear them hoot," she said with a happy tremor in her voice, "without thinking of Monza. I used there, a white owl myself with large eyes, as I saw myself once in a glass, to watch at night hour by hour. That was in my spindle-legged, short-frocked days."

"Your . . . ?"

"I was a Lombard maiden," she answered, mimicking the voice of Madame Campi as Rhodumunda. "Would you have loved me then? Hold me to you. I am cold."

She pressed herself against him in a slow languid caress.

"Would you have loved me then?" she repeated.

And as in a mystic pledge of death she wound her arms about him; mouth to mouth she whispered:

"In an hour! How I love you! No; let me kiss you. In an hour, and in that hour I shall have lived each second of these two hours, a thousand times, made them years in my thought."

But her embrace, despite her courageous words, was, in its struggling hysteric violence, like an embrace by a grave into which both were falling.

III

Under the open sky Rentzdorf stood for some seconds hesitating. It was now half-past two. The distance from the Palazzo Esterthal to his lodging in the Rothenthurm was, by the ramparts, nearly three miles; but, across the inner city, less than two. He did not wish to be seen at the Rittersaal until at least an hour or an hour and a half after Amalie's arrival. To summon a hackney in this part of the faubourgs was to invite scrutiny. He decided to walk to his lodging and, having changed his clothes, to drive to the Hofburg.

He started at a rapid pace and entering the inner city by

the Mölker bastion, he struck south-eastward across the Graben.

Rentzdorf knew no moments in which his mind yielded itself so absolutely to his religion, to the Tragic Vision of God, as those moments in which he had just forced himself from the awe and dominion of his idolized mistress.

"Art's eternities?" he reasoned. "This that now I feel, this that now I know, alone is worth enternalizing. What is God's highest total presence in her, in me, if it is not this passion that I struggle to utter, this ecstasy that I shudder to re-imagine?"

Like chords of a mystic music summoning other chords to aid them in forming some still diviner harmonies, earlier unforgettable hours came down the years calling to this hour—hours which he and his mistress had fixed in their memories, now by the gift of a flower, now by a book or a jewel; at other times simply by the hour's own natural setting, the stillness of summer woods, a garden, a room in an inn, a moon-rise by a lake, the day's chance environment.

"Amalie . . . Amalie von Esterthal."

The repetition of her name was like a synthesis of the hours passed by her side. Yes; it was in such hours, remembered thus, that he could darkly hazard the answer to the transporting obsessant question, "What is Being?" Yes, it was in such hours as these that the still more dread question, "What is God?" subtly possessed the entire soul and the entire universe, and redissolved all in the bliss that was before Being arose.

"This," he said impatiently, yet in awe, "this is to be God; to know this; to feel this."

Yes; it was to such hours as these that he could say, "Be thus for ever; thou art so fair." For him, for her, to know in their own fierce but unestranging sorrow the world-soul's sorrow, the Calvary of Being, then, struggling, resisting,

bleeding, to be torn inexorably asunder—this was earth's meaning, God's meaning; for her, for him, this was the manifestation of the tragic thought which underlies the worlds.

He raised his head. An oil lamp by a window threw a grudging light across the narrow street.

Unawares he had passed St. Stephen's square. Another church, St. Peter's,—he knew it by its dome overburdened with gilding and ornament—now loomed up a little behind him on his left.

"I must have taken a wrong turning."

Annoyed yet amused, Rentzdorf retraced his steps.

It was an unfamiliar part of the city. Those side streets in which the lamps were placed at wider and wider distances, the low-arched doorways, made a sinister impression. Now and then a stooping figure slid past him, looking neither to right nor left. It was one of those, he thought, who in sleepless misery wait the day and see it rise and are not glad.

Man's burden, the struggles of the human race—no ethical leader or professional philanthropist ever felt that burden with more imaginative sympathy than Rentzdorf.

He regained the main street and resumed his course. He was now in one of the oldest quarters of the town. Bundles of wood, according to the Viennese custom, lay heaped in front of the doors; here and there the pavement was merged in the street; sometimes he had to walk between tenements plunged in total darkness or through narrow passages that seemed built for sin or crime.

From under an arch at the end of a cavernous passage he emerged into an open space. A high wall rose on his right; beyond, in the darkness, some dimly outlined gables and a tower.

It was Santa Maria, the famous Dominican church.

Within its precincts, one of the graves was the grave of Irène Apponyi.

Rentzdorf felt his face change. An immense sorrow stole up to him like a visible mist.

"In questa tomba oscura . . ." Overhead the starless night; then remembrance and the heart's cry to the inattentive dead—questioning, expostulating, in bitter, accusing, or exculpatory appeal.

"Brought to rest there, moveless for ever, she that was once so fever-quick in all her movements; corruption, she that was once so fair. Unhearing, unanswering nothingness . . ."

It was too great, too august for pity.

"What hand pushed me this way to-night? Incongruous?" he reflected.

"To stand thus by the grave of a dead mistress, the kisses of a living mistress still hot on my lips, incongruous? Yes; as life is, as death is."

"Crimson-dyed with these two women's blood," he muttered to himself, resuming his walk. "All my art-life; crimson-dyed with these two women's blood, all my thought-life."

He sank in reverie.

"If *she* too were dead?"

Rentzdorf wheeled round as though a hand had been laid on his shoulder.

"No, no, no, no . . ."

He felt now, he knew now the horror that had pulsated in his mistress's voice an hour ago. Her gloomy words, "We shall have the courage to destroy each other . . ." came back to him, weaving themselves into the texture of his own speculations.

All great art, poetry or music, all great history, is tragic, because the inmost nature of the universe is tragic. The more, therefore, a poem or a symphony, a statue or a

painting partakes of that world-anguish, the "greater" it is, that is to say, the truer the more vital it is, for it is saturated most deeply with Being's essence.

"Yes," Rentzdorf concluded, "that is the meaning, or there is no meaning."

He walked on.

A mass of trees in the West, impenetrable and dark, rose suddenly on his right not half a mile distant. It was the Prater. In front and on his left stretched the glimmering levels, league on league, of the Marchfeld and the illimitable plain beyond, and far on the horizon, just above a mist-bank heavy and cold, burned a lonely splendour—the waning moon.

He stood rapt.

"God, how strange, how beautiful!"

The torturing pent-up emotions, thought-irradiated, searched the profoundest mysteries—the all-beginnings and the all-endings. The beauty of woman, the beauty of nature, the beauty of night, soul-ecstasy, sense-ecstasy, were rays that, converging, darted from the eternity named the past into the eternity named the future.

"Time? Eternity? What are they? They are words by which our minds portray God's severance from God's goal, nothing more."

But in such moments as this, that goal was, as in a mirage, attained; attained in him, attained in God. He sank in yet profounder reverie.

An intoxicating vision tore him from his reverie—Amalie von Esterthal stepping from her domino, the lustre of her arms, her shoulders, her bosom, a blinding loveliness, surpassing the lustre of her own gems. She was for him the reality, *realitas realitatum;* and yonder in the Rittersaal she waited.

He struck sharply for his lodging in the Rothenthurm, now not four minutes distant. He waked his sleepy servant and

half an hour later, in the Spanish dress of the seventeenth century, black embroidered velvet, white silk stockings and sword, Rentzdorf was recrossing Vienna on his way to the Hofburg.

IV

To Rentzdorf the pile of buildings which composes the Hofburg, the royal palace of the Habsburgs, had by familiarity lost much of their antiquarian interest.

As a boy accompanying his mother, and in his youth as a student at the university, he had been familiar with its rooms, with the court and hall of the Switzers, the Archduke's tower, and with vault or window, square or donjon, rich with memories drawn from the crusades or later centuries.

But the Hofburg had more personal associations.

In its winter riding-school he had first seen his mistress; he had met her at its fêtes and at its balls; he had visited with her its art treasures, and in jest or in earnest, they had at length fixed on three objects as the symbols to them of all that the palace and its heroic or romantic past had come to mean—the sword and gauntlets of Charlemagne, Tasso's manuscript of the *Jerusalem*, and the *Leda* of Benvenuto Cellini. The tragic dynasty itself, the Habsburg men and women, their crimes or madness, their energy or their dullness, rarely came into their talk. Yet to Rentzdorf himself the Habsburgs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had still, as the protagonists of oppression, a kind of blasting splendour, best personified perhaps in Wallenstein's genius and sinister magnificence.

There was a griding crash. The hackney had stopped close to the row of brilliantly lit windows. A crowd still loafed about the main entrance, mixing with the link-boys and servants.

At the foot of the grand staircase a door opened and a burst of voluptuous music set his blood on fire.

"What will she wear?"

A figure in Magyar uniform, but evidently a French officer, was striding along a passage, humming the air. On seeing Rentzdorf he stared suspiciously at his costume, seemed about to speak, but changing his mind at Rentzdorf's glance, resumed his patrol.

The next minute, irritated by the incident, which reminded him of Austria's humiliation, Rentzdorf stood in the Rittersaal itself.

Pillars of polished granite with Corinthian capitals supported the frescoed roof of this imposing room, now flooded with the soft resplendence of a thousand lamps and candelabra that repeated their flames in crystal lustres as in irridescent mirrors. An estrade ran down one side. On the opposite side, between the pillars, a conservatory full of flowering shrubs drew the eyes imperceptibly into the sapphire tranquillity of the night, uniting thus with nature this, the most artificially refined scene in Europe or the world. Everywhere about the room were flowers, massed in the orchestra, half-concealing the musicians, crowded on the front of the estrade, hanging in festoons and garlands from the frieze—carnations, gardenias, ropes of violets, azaleas, and innumerable roses, all levied upon the Imperial hothouses of Schönbrunn itself, from Prague, Innsbruck, and the historic gardens of Znaim and Semmering; and, mixing with this cloud of natural fragrance, the perfumes of a hundred women's dresses; and on the leisured space of the wide floor the picturesque costumes of the men—Magyar, Pole, Slovac, French, Austrian; and everywhere the radiance of diamonds and the gleam of naked shoulders.

A waltz was in progress.

Under Damirol's direction the dancers were arranged

in two elongated circles or ellipses, taking in nearly the whole of the wide floor, but the circles moved in opposite directions. In the outer, the dancers moved from left to right; in the inner, from right to left.

"A posture of the body—it is in such a dance the posture of a soul," Berthold Stahrenberg had once said, and tonight, watching the languor and fury of this waltz, Rentzdorf had opportunity enough of testing the accuracy of Bolli's psychology.

Whatever of distinction was left in Vienna or Austria itself was here, and here also were the froth and the lees of the most reckless society in Europe, its grossness, its fatuity, its luxury, its vanity. Baron X., in a short velvet coat bordered with silver fox, as well-known for his amours as for his gambling debts, Rentzdorf recognized at once; and dancing not very far behind him, in the arms of one of the Kinskys, that same Baron X.'s wife, the decoy for young men of assured wealth, her head flung back as though asleep, rousing herself now and then from a luxurious dream to take the step. Then in rapid succession he saw Prince Z., an elephant erect on the stout legs of a dwarf, owner of seventy thousand acres; Madame A., who lived frankly the life of Catherine II.; the duellist Y., bully and society blackmailer, paid "in kind," not money, dressed in Polish costume, with yellow boots, in his biretta a diamond aigrette; Count Purgstall and his Scottish wife, described on her advent in Vienna as "the sister of Dugald Stewart" and provoking the comment, "Qui diable est Dugald Stewart?"; the Countess Potocki, celebrated for her house full of tame leopards, monkeys, grizzly bears, and human dwarfs; Count Humbert, Ambassador to Naples during Amalie's stay there; Baron von Stiegerling; von Stürmer, afterwards celebrated as Francis II.'s representative at Sainte Hélène; Princess X., one of the "three princesses" of Metternich's circle.

Decidedly Andréossy's ball was a success, thought Rentzdorf ironically.

"Perish the world in fire, but let Vienna waltz," was a current version of a mediæval friar's indignant cry. "The trumpet of the Judgment morn—Vienna would think it an invitation to the waltz."

Nevertheless, Rentzdorf's ironic mood quickly dissipated and before the drifting forms he lost sight of individuals as before a forest swept by winds; he saw only the vivid tormenting unassailable beauty of the whole—of those white and glowing arms and bosoms, those sparkling or tarnished eyes. Woman's beauty, in evil or in good—it was still nature's supremest achievement, Time's most alluring mystery, here on this planet and now.

Two dancers, quitting the outer circle, stopped near him. The lady, tilting her chin to see more clearly under the black velvet of her mask, said to her partner as she fanned herself:

"When I die I mean to be buried like Countess Beresanyi —I shall have nothing but men asked to my funeral, all young, all laughing, and each with an assignation that night with one of his three mistresses."

"What a sphinx you are!" came the heavy answer.

"A sphinx? Within ten minutes you have called Stadion a sphinx, Bonaparte a sphinx, Speranski a sphinx, Metternich a sphinx. Am I too a sphinx?"

"Assuredly; and the most charming riddler of all."

The mask, quitting her partner, advanced with a quick step towards Rentzdorf, but checking herself brusquely she took her partner's arm.

"How? Can you read riddles in the dark then? Mine, for instance, could you read mine? You know the penalty of failure."

"Let me risk reading your riddle! I would not miss that adventure—no, not for all the ambassadors of all the powers."

"Dance with me, then," she said with an ambiguous laugh.

She held out a jewelled hand, and, her head thrown languidly back, her carmined lips uplifted, with a bound she dashed into the outer circle and the maze of whirling skirts.

Rentzdorf looked after them.

"Can it be she?" he thought. "And Amalie here!"

He searched both circles of the waltz. He could see Amalie nowhere.

He had recognized, or imagined that he had recognized behind the mask, the dark eyes, the tormented mouth and wayward grace of Adelheid Ortski.

"She too?" he asked. "My God, she too here to-night? All to-night is incongruous as a midsummer dream."

The music rushed on; the soaring violins were like cries of delicious anguish; the beat of the 'cellos like the throbbing of human hearts. On the polished floor he saw with a curious intentness the reflections of the dancers in pale colours, shadows of shadows.

V

Quitting the Rittersaal, he sauntered into one of the adjoining apartments.

In a long narrow room, adorned with two rows of white marble pillars with gilded capitals, some sixty or seventy men and women sat or reclined on sofas and low chairs. There were groups of ten and groups of two, but all were eating, drinking, and talking or flirting.

At a table near the entrance with three other Russians he saw again Alexis Razumowski's broad yellowish face and heard again his creaking voice.

"The chief thing in a masked ball is to speak before you think. Go on talking. Say anything, say everything;

pell-mell, witty or foolish, wise or dull! To raise a smile or a laugh is the all-in-all! But you Germans never can and never will do this. You are like the English; you must think before you speak."

Rentzdorf avoided this group and went into a room on the right. Here servants in black and gold liveries were handing about cold meats, iced drinks, candied orange, coffee, and champagne. The conversation was in French; but during the earlier part of the evening, in order to accentuate the Austrian character of the ball, it had been in German. Here a universal languorousness pervaded the air; the music was at a distance and heightened the effect.

In a niche, by an Artemis in marble, a woman of thirty or thirty-five in a black velvet mask lay lazily fanning herself: her head rested on silken cushions, her eyelids were lowered, and one foot in its satin slipper, thrust carelessly forward, accentuated the lines of her form. For her felicity she seemed to desire nothing except to be alone with her memories or her dreams. Near her, two other women stood, unmasked, talking to each other in low voices. A man in the blue and red uniform of the Austrian chasseurs approached them. Another group of five was composed of two cavaliers and three women. One cavalier, a man of fifty, had the look of an Assyrian—dark, sleepy eyes, curving nose, and on his protruding chest a thick black beard. Horses, dogs, hounds, hunting had been discussed in turn. The conversation had now settled on Bonaparte. Had M. Uvarow, an Austrian official asked, addressing a young Russian, heard the Cardinal Pignatelli's *mot* about the flatterer who traced the Bonapartes to a Greek family of princely rank—the καλομερόι?

Uvarow, a giant with wide-set tranquil eyes, waited, silent. He had not heard the *mot*.

"Well," the Austrian went on, happy to place his anecdote, "when M. l'abbè Pignatelli was told of this discovery,

he remarked at once that he did not know about Napoleon himself, but he was certain that his sister the Princess Borghese must belong to the καλομερόι."

Uvarow, after some seconds' reflection, laughed, a big earth-shaking laugh. But to the ladies the narrator had to explain lazily that měros (μερος) meant *a part*, so that καλομερόι meant the same as *Bonaparti*, whereas měros (μερος) meant *thigh*, and καλομερόι, Pauline's putative ancestors, meant "the beautiful-thighed."

Suddenly a woman's voice in low charmed surprise called Rentzdorf's name.

"Come here!"

It was Lan-Lan.

She had in her left hand a tiny silver plate, with the Habsburg arms in gold and lapis lazuli on the edge, and on the plate the fragments of a pastry which she was eating —one of those condiments the reverse of "simple," in which all fruits and all sweet tastes touch the palate at once—pineapple, clove, peach, caramel, honey, strawberry.

Kessling seated near her sofa, jumped to his feet.

"Ha, poet, I've not seen you before. What news from the seat of war?"

Kessling had the mania, fostered by his riches and his rude vitality, of treating every acquaintance as if he were an old friend and every woman of rank as if she had at one time been his mistress.

Rentzdorf sat down beside Lan-Lan and Bolli. The latter was wearing a short Spanish cloak of dove-wing velvet trimmed with ermine, white silk vest, breeches, and stockings, and on his shoes broad silver buckles. "You are in luck anyhow," Bolli said in a sort of apology for his satellite's crudeness. "Here is a living poem; Lan-Lan eating burnt almonds and cream cakes."

To Lan-Lan this evening had been a triumph. Her costume had outshone Princess Daruka's, and after a steady

survey of Lan-Lan's superb natural coiffure, bound by a fillet studded with diamonds, with one large pearl suspended by a tiny gold chain on her brow—after a not less steady survey of her face, of her arms, and the opulent yet harmonious curves of her figure, the Circassian, with a deep breath, had uttered the fatidical words;

"It is she who is Zuleika to-night, not I."

And she had applied to Lan-Lan, Att'r's verses describing the queen of oriental passion.

A listless voice with cadences which sounded oddly in French, addressed Bolli.

Rentzdorf turned to meet the morbid glittering eyes, the nervously working features of the young Polish diplomatist, Caspar Czartorisky, nephew of Prince Adam Czartorisky the statesman. The face, set in a cloud of soft dark hair, was instantly arresting, but even to strangers the effect quickly passed and only its weakness and over-excitability remained to disturb rather than to engross the mind; one turned with relief from the Slavonic picturesqueness to the steadier energy and depth of the German faces around. Yet Caspar Czartorisky was typical of a phrase through which the German and the European mind was passing—spiritual energies which, widowed of their old inspirations, had not yet found a new; nascent life-weariness, sometimes affected, sometimes sincere. But in Czartorisky all was tinged with an outré sentimentalism. He had declaimed passages of *Ossian* and *Werther* in front of a skull, and in imitation of the Emperor Otho, he had slept with a dagger under his pillow. He had found peace and a home in Vienna—in its picture galleries, its parks, its romantic environs and its libraries, and above all in Mozart's music, which he styled the very soul of the soul of Vienna "l'âme de l'âme Viennoise."

"For myself," said Bolli in answer to a remark of the young Pole, "I find a woman more desirable just because

she is subject to these infirmities—decay and death. I would even imitate that troubadour whose mistress was struck with leprosy—What? Is the conversation growing too decadent for your taste?" Bolli said, addressing Count Markowitz, Johann's brother, who, in an immaculate stock, grey coat and star, had unexpectedly risen to his feet.

"Let us have no quarrelling to-night," Lan-Lan said in her soft, lazy but authoritative manner. "Viennese we are, and Viennese let us be—not Russians or English; no, not even Poles," with a smile to Czartorisky.

"Oh, to-night," the latter answered chivalrously, "Warsaw is too happy to be a suburb of Vienna."

Lan-Lan's syntax when she spoke French was not faultless, but she never hesitated for a word, boldly interspersing, sometimes with a picturesque charm, German or Viennese idioms.

"Save in words of wisdom spake she not unto them," said Bolli; "but if in the presence of Wisdom I may adventure a word, I should like to ask his Illustriousness, Count Markowitz . . . Pardon me," Bolli said, interrupting himself and turning to Rentzdorf. "You guess the issue? Markowitz before you came was on his hobby; he is still the very phœnix of Vienna, he and the incomparable Mack! When was there an age in which that taunt, decadence, has not been flung at insight by stupidity?" And to Markowitz he said, "Meaning on this earth there is none, except beauty. That conviction is our faith, our church, or, if you like, our religion and our God. Is your God a better? And in spite of our decadence, Rentzdorf's, Lan-Lan's, Czartorisky's, and mine, our regiments did not so badly at Aspern, n'est-ce pas?"

"Do you know whither this will lead you? Do you know whither you are going?" Markowitz said solemnly.

Bolli looked at him, ironic, and answered disconcertingly:

"Perfectly."

"Perfectly?"

"I will repeat the word in six languages if it will make my meaning plainer."

Rentzdorf looked at Bolli. This was not the man he had seen at Buda in July last. What was this change which the three months had worked? Lan-Lan too was altered. A smile lay on her lips, but there was a feverous melancholy in her eyes and each time she met Bolli's glance her white lids perceptibly lowered.

"Everybody now wishes you to be something else than you actually are," Lan-Lan's younger brother, Max Dietrich, said in the pause. He spoke in an awkward, self-conscious, but modest and very winning manner, and when Bolli looked at him encouragingly and Lan-Lan dropped her air of sisterly condescension, he went on, "It spoils Napoleon to me. He wants everybody to be cut after a certain pattern."

"Right," said Bolli. "If he could make Europe a moral drill-ground he would appoint Markowitz his moral chief-of-the-staff."

At a repeated tapping made by the master of the ceremonies' wand on the floor in the adjoining room Lan-Lan said to her brother, "What is it? Maxi, will you go and see?"

Max got up leisurely, not sorry to display the magnificence of his uniform and the gallantry of his carriage.

"The figure dance!" he called back a second later.

VI

There was a general movement in the company towards the Rittersaal. Bolli took Rentzdorf's arm, detaining him.

"Let's stay a little. God, but it is good to see you again! We in Vienna have been walking amongst precipices for

days, for months. One is named war; the other and the ghastlier descent, peace."

Rentzdorf looked at the handsome, reckless, dissipated features, the high, square forehead, the ardent eyes. A mean or cowardly thought had never found lodging or comfort there. What then was it that harassed him?

"I pray it may be war to-night—anything, anything rather than this hideous, humiliating, unspeakable peace. War is like brandy; it saves one from thinking. It even gives a meaning to this unmeaning Austria and this unmeaning earth. The world-soul's strife? Shiva dancing high above the roaring agonies of worlds! That is the best thought I have derived from your book, Heinrich. I repeated it the night before Wagram. War? Bonaparte has his limitations, but, by God, what grandeur! What heroic vitality!"

"Only the limited are strong, Bolli," Rentzdorf said, humouring him and attributing his state of mind to the excitement of the hour, perhaps to wine.

"That is what I cannot get Johann to see! He has the Markowitz taint. He will drag in morality, the good will; as if any one knew, outside the Markowitz barracks, what good or evil really is. I quarrelled with him this morning; now that you are here we shall understand each other again."

He looked in friendly anxiety into Rentzdorf's face.

The latter stepped aside.

A lady with a beautiful, white, oval chin passed and smiled up to Bolli. He bowed deeply.

"You do not know her? Ah, you have been away. It is Frau von Seckenheim; newly married; a Suabian."

It was the lady whom Rentzdorf had observed reclining alone, sunk in her dreams.

But there was a sound like the click of fans, a burst of music, laughter, talk.

"The minuet is over. We must go in for the figure dance."

Taking Rentzdorf's arm, he sauntered with him into the Rittersaal.

VII

The figure dance was, like Damirol's scheme for the waltz, designed to be seen as well as danced. It was a modification of the tarantelle as danced in Naples some ten years before by Lady Hamilton, and in Paris by Josephine Beauharnais, Madame Tallien and Madame Récamier—slower, more majestic, and though so arranged that several couples or groups could dance it simultaneously, not less passionately voluptuous. It had been styled, not infelicitously, the Austrian tarantelle; la valse tarantelle.

Amalie, on the estrade, surrounded by a brilliant crowd, was looking at the dancers. Toc, Lan-Lan, and Nusschen were now close to her, dancing together, moving in a slow cadenced rhythm.

"Whose is the music?" Rentzdorf asked.

"Weber's," said Bolli. "He is quite young, but can do this kind of thing supremely well."

Suddenly, on seeing Bolli, Lan-Lan quitted the circle, and, with a glance at Toc, led Nusschen towards Amalie.

Bolli at the same moment stepped forward to Lan-Lan and in apparent consternation—"Lady, you have dropped your pearl."

Lan-Lan put both her hands to her brow, then to her snowy bosom.

"What made you say that?" she demanded. "Hein? What made you?"

The smile on her lips was like sunlight on the crimson of a rose.

"Pardon! in the effulgence of your brow I could not see the pearl."

"I am so hot," she said aloud; her eyes steady, she whispered, "Take me into the gardens. Not that way, here, under the trees. What is the hour? Day must be nearer than I thought. The sky is sapphire."

VIII

In the tarantelle meanwhile Amalie had taken Lan-Lan's place. In an instant Rentzdorf was in a dream, a dark enchantment. Life's end was Time's end, and Time's end, the soul's destiny, was to hear that music, gazing on those exquisite forms—Toc's flexuous grace, Nusschen's vital youth, his mistress's entrancing presence.

The measure of the dance had heightened. It became intenser, wilder. More than twenty groups were now on the floor, some in threes some in twos. The women's forms to his imagination seemed less a material essence than a celestial song, creating new harmonies, more impassioning, more soul-enthralling, as they danced on—now advancing, now receding, in wreaths, in circles, an intertwining loveliness without end.

"This it is, beauty's very soul, its dread inaccessibility—that it is. Can this power exist latent in those bodies yet not know its effects upon the heart? No; by God, yes, they do know."

In confirmation of his words the dancers by an unconscious or purposed interchange of thought appeared to have conceived a design by which they could display their supreme grace—a figure in which each manifested the perfections of her body at once in movement and in sculptural repose. It was a figure of a difficulty so extreme that to fail in it creditably was a success, to succeed a triumph.

Breathless he waited. Could they succeed?

A cry of deep but suppressed admiration escaped him and was repeated in several voices around. The success

was as bewildering as it was complete. Nearer the dancers came and nearer, circling round and past each other, like light upon light. No music had ever penetrated his soul more intimately, no symphony had ever worked in him a transport more ineffable; yet this was sight.

In a second they swept past him, revolving; his blood felt the indescribable magnetism. A pungent yet delicate perfume that he seemed to know and yet not to know remained in his nostrils.

"Beauty and mystery . . ."

Close beside him Caspar Czartorisky in his most affected manner was declaiming to three or four listeners:

"No woman's face ought to show so royal a joy. It challenges the gods to envy. Had Paris on Mount Ida a fairer vision? Who is she, that demi-deity with the hair? Countess Esterthal? What?"

"Tshut . . ." came the answer. "You have evidently just come from Warsaw."

Rentzdorf moved away.

Suddenly he was aware of a fast-spreading confusion, here, there, everywhere. The dance had been interrupted; the orchestra silenced. The dancers were standing in bewildered groups. The spectators on the estrade alone seemed to know the cause of the disturbance. Their looks expressed astonishment, impatience, anxiety, or excited joy. Amongst the dancers, several preserved the position in which the disturbance had first arrested them. Some had one foot still raised; others had stopped in the midst of a sentence; one lady, stooping to detach a fallen wreath that clung to her skirt, still held it in her hand. Others stared at M. Damirol seeking an explanation. Then came questions, exclamations of annoyance or amusement, and some oaths.

All at once the confusion was interrupted by a single sound. It was a wild hurrah, repeated, and repeated again.

"Long live the Archduke Maximilian! Es lebe der Erzherzog Maximilian! Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!"

The master of ceremonies strode excitedly towards the orchestra. It broke into Haydn's anthem, the Austrian national hymn, made more solemn by the death of the composer not many months before—"Gott erhalte unsern Kaiser . . ."

At that solemn melody there was a wild rush from the gardens and from the rooms surrounding the Rittersaal. What could it mean? Each as they arrived stopped and stood bound as in a charm.

Even at such a moment Rentzdorf was forced to notice Bolli and Lan-Lan. They came in very slowly. On Lan-Lan's face was a set flush; a tress of her hair loosened on the left temple imparted to her something mænadic, world-defiant. A delicious recklessness was in her bearing, forming a bizarre contrast with the richness of her dress and the magnificence of her jewels. The diamond fillet was still on her brows, but the pearl had fallen or been unhooked from its edge.

But at a louder shout he turned to the corner of the room whence the excitement emanated. There a crowd had gathered round the three men whose entrance had caused the uproar. In one he recognized instantly the discomposed, turbulent countenance and blackguardly, high-bred air of the Catiline of Vienna, the Archduke Maximilian, the hero of the bombardment. He had the Habsburg peculiarities, the heavy refinement, the breed, the cruelty, something of the madness. In his mad attempt to defend the city there had been no patriotism. His mistress, Julie von Hofstenger, had been captured in the hunting-lodge dedicated to those nocturnal orgies where, with the debauched companions of his revels, he rehearsed the suppers of the Borgias. Yet like his brother, the Cardinal, and like the two Emperors, his uncles, he was

a fanatic of the new music, passing whole days lulled by Mozart's melodies and Julie's autumnal charms. But that other beside the Archduke, a man with grey hair and beard and vice-worn or care-worn face—who was he?

A man behind Rentzdorf, in civilian costume but with the Order of Maria Theresa conspicuous on his breast, had been observing the sinister figure, and now said—"He looks like a man who has sold his country and has the price in his pocket, and is now troubled with the question—Have I asked too much? Should I have asked still more?"

The excitement mounted. Men wearing various foreign orders, men in uniforms covered with stars, seemed to start from the ground. Women in silks and satins, rushed this way, rushed that way, and jostled against each other, yielding or overbearing.

Gradually the chaos of emotion became a cosmos, became a joy, became triumph. Tears and hysteric laughter; then the regulation screams and faintings of women, but even these had a sort of sincerity. Men and women clasped each other's hands and stood silent; others, locked in embraces, laughed and cried together and, without visible embarrassment, unclasped each other to clasp others.

At last the confused shouting became an articulate cry, "The peace! The peace is signed! Long live Austria! Long live our Emperor! Long live the Archduke Maximilian!" and again the band broke into the national hymn.

The gesticulations of the master of ceremonies, aided by the stewards, at last succeeded in restoring a temporary order or semblance of order.

Bolli, crossing the floor, came up to Rentzdorf. "It is over then?" he said in a curious voice. "Well, it was to have come."

There was no gladness in the tones—yet no resentment; the man to whom chance offers the opportunity of perfecting a crime might have had that voice, that manner.

Rentzdorf by his own emotion knew now how intolerable the suspense had grown to himself as to his mistress. *Her* joy after the haggard anxieties of the months broke in his heart; but he knew in that same moment how much he was a German.

Standing silent by Bolli his mind groped at the meaning of this event, this certainty after so much dubiety. Peace not war. But upon what terms?

And as in a kaleidoscope he saw Bonaparte with Prussia, the Rhine, with Central Germany, Saxony, Bavaria, the Tyrol, with Italy, with Austria, with Russia as his allies or his vassal states. In world-history what single man had possessed a power so portentous? Could any man stand so high and not fall from sheer dizziness? He saw Napoleon's face in marble quietude, the eyes, the resolute chin. Nothing could jar that calm—neither disaster nor triumph.

"In action the most astonishing portent that the Aryan race has produced. Christ is the glory of the Semitic; so is Hannibal. But this man? Will his name indeed in the centuries supplant Christ's?"

Bolli's hand was on his arm.

"Yonder comes Johann: he will give us the authentic details."

Rentzdorf turned. The next instant Johann was beside him. The latter's features, always very dark, had a stern, repressed expression, but under the mask it was easy to detect his fearful emotion. He stared about him like a man who, coming suddenly from darkness to intense light, sees all things too distinctly and too confusedly. Nothing was in perspective. "Let us get out of this," he said to Rentzdorf, ignoring Bolli.

In a deserted side-room the curious gloomy sentimentalism which in the Austrian nature contends with Teutonic apathy showed itself. In rapid words in answer to Bolli's

questions, he sketched the terms of the Treaty—three millions of their most faithful subjects torn from the Habsburgs; three million square miles of territory torn from Austria; a war indemnity of three millions.

"But that is nothing. It is this marriage . . ."

"The marriage? It is true then?"

Both of Johann's listeners paled frightfully.

"My country, oh God, my country!" Johann said furiously. "There is no longer a Germany. Men shall say to-morrow—Here stands a French fortress once named Germany. Her rivers are in bonds. The Rhine mirrors the faces of voluntary serfs. Slaves by a tyrant's permission crawl on their mother-earth and dig Germany into a grave for a nation's honour. Upon what shall the returning sun look? Austria—Hell and death! Austria?"

He grasped at his sword.

Rentzdorf misunderstanding his purpose, seized his arm.

"Leave me, Heinrich."

He wrenched himself aside, and, sitting down, placed the blade against his knee. He tugged, he pulled, but the proved steel did not break.

With an oath he sprang erect, and putting his foot on the blade close to the hilt:

"Break! Malediction on you, break!"

With a griding horrid crash, like a creature in pain, the blade snapped.

Johann stood staring dully and stupidly down at the fragments.

"An emperor gave it to my father the morning after Hochkirchen; and, of the same house, an emperor to-day has shattered the honour of Austria more irretrievably than that sword is shattered."

Bolli with a haggard face walked to and fro muttering to himself. Under his slender hooked nose a patch of powder

on his chin covering a slight razor-cut, hung to the place like a plaster.

There was a momentary blaze of anger, if not of scorn, in Rentzdorf's eyes. This patriotic effervescence grated on him harshly.

Was patriotism this?

Yes, sentimental it might be and even theatrical, yet the hope of Germany was just in such despair and in such authentic wrath as this.

CHAPTER X

NAPOLEON'S ADDRESS TO HIS GUARD

I

SATURDAY, the 14th October, was the anniversary of Jena, a date sacred in the annuals of the French armies.

Nevertheless, every attempt at celebration had sputtered out. If the subject had been discussed at headquarters no instructions had been issued. The soldiers themselves were for the most part indifferent or hostile. After six months on the Danube, three of war and three of insufferable tedium, war-weariness had become epidemic. The single will which Napoleon attributed to every army had declared itself, and it was the will not for the celebration of past battles, but for the celebration of immediate peace.

Since 1806, the Old Guard had been recruited from the veterans of many corps, and at Enzersdorf, as around Schönbrunn, there were hundreds of grenadiers who had fought at Jena with Napoleon or with Davout at Auerstädt. These men were as jealous for the glory of the Third Corps as those of the Fifth were jealous for the glory of Lannes and the capture of Hohenlohe's division at Prenzlow, and, this morning, in default of Turkish fire and salvoes of artillery, they talked.

"It was just such a raw and foggy Saturday morning as this," said one of Davout's grenadiers to a conscript of the

Young Guard, "but instead of the Danube and Enzersdorf we had the Saale and Hassenhausen. Just after daybreak, I was squat on a ridge; I had taken off one of my boots to get rid of the pine-needles when I saw—well, 'twas like a bit of lovely colour, pink and white and pearl and blue on the mist—coming straight at me. Quick as lightning,—'By God, they are charging us!' thought I; and old Blücher it was and his hussars, coming bang on us, like bewigged devils out of the fog."

"To-day is Saturday, Jules, that was a Thursday," said a disconcertingly quiet voice on the narrator's left.

"You were there, perhaps?"

"No; but I was at Jena the same morning. It couldn't be Thursday at Jena and Saturday at Auerstädt, only three miles away, could it?"

"Well, our twenty thousand beat sixty thousand Prussians, Blücher and all, which is more than you did at Jena. Saturday or Thursday, though *le petit bougre* himself was with you."

"Right you are. Vive Davout, vive le Troisième Corps!" shouted a dozen voices.

Of all the marshals, Davout at this period commanded the greatest confidence amongst the rank and file. Every survivor of Auerstädt had seen him that October morning rushing from regiment to regiment, his face blackened with powder, his coat in tatters, persuading, exhorting, encouraging, or terrible in his rebuke—compelling his men to be steadfast, to stick to their positions, and not to waste a cartridge.

Then more argument and more narrative.

It was between seven and eight o'clock. The sun hung as a disc of dull orange above the levels of the Marchfeld; but white mists still trailed along the Danube, here draping the steep banks, forest-crowned, there veiling the dripping tarpaulins of barges laden with corn and fruit, or the cluster-

ing masts and pennons of the many-languaged, many-hued craft from every port between Ratisbon and Rustchuk.

Near Enzersdorf, four miles to the west of Vienna, where this talk on Jena was going on, the twenty-third company was dribbling into camp from reveille drill. As they marched they sang, as men sing who are happy or in high spirits. The rat-a-tat of kettledrums heightened the gaiety.

"Buvons, enfans de la patrie,
Abattons les bouteilles, abattons!
Bai-aisons les belles femmes, bai-aisons!"

The new-comers fraternized with the grenadiers about the bivouac fires, the faces again became the masks of boredom or bad temper, of gaiety, or vigilant anxiety such as marks the faces of men who cherish some fierce but precarious hope.

A grenadier, stretched out by himself with his back against the stem of a chestnut, watched the scene. To the talk of Jena and Auerstädt he had at first not even listened, but a look of listless curiosity gradually illumined his haggard, sunburnt features. He made no effort, however, to approach the group.

He was a Champagnard and his name was Pierre Lestocq. Like the other "veterans" of the Guard, he was not more than six and thirty; but his long drooping moustaches were already grizzled. Severely wounded at Znaim, he had just recovered when he was struck down by "hospital" fever, and though dismissed two days ago as "cured," he knew in his heart that he was "done for."

"And I'm damned glad of it," he had said to a comrade. "I've had my fill of war and peace."

Stubbornly resisted at first, this life-weariness as well as war-weariness had become oppressive as sleep in his limbs at the end of a long forced day's march.

Pierre Lestocq was one of thousands of French soldiers whose lives at this epoch had, in sheer crude truth, been but a battle and a march. Seventeen years ago the cannonade of Valmy had ushered in a period of almost incessant warfare, in which Aspern and Wagram were the most recent episodes. These were the men whom the Revolution had made Frenchmen, giving them the consciousness that the soil they tilled, the land for which they fought, was in very deed theirs, that France was not a stepmother any longer, but a true motherland. Lestocq himself had in him something of Lazare Hoche's temper, but nothing of Hoche's genius for war; nevertheless to him, as to Hoche, the discovery of a tattered copy of Rousseau's *Contrat Social* had brought as it were a message from on high.

"You speak of the ancien régime?" he would say to the younger conscripts, jibbing at the ceaseless wars. "What did that do for you? It murdered your father by forced labour and your mother by hunger. And what has the Revolution done for you? It has made you men; given you and me something to live for—or to die for. Oh yes, I've seen ugliness enough during a battle and after it, blood and grim death enough; but I have seen nothing so terrifying as the things I've seen in peace on the edge of a wood. I was a boy then and I daresay I thought them 'funny.' They are hell to my memory now; hell to me in my dreams. Did you ever see the teeth and lips of dead men who had eaten nothing but grass for three months? A battlefield is nasty, desperately nasty; but, *fichtre*, it's beautiful beside that sight. To die in battle is to die a wolf's death, if you like, but, wolves or not, we know what we're dying for."

Yet Pierre Lestocq was not by any means a "born" fighter. He had "time to be afraid." After fifteen years of war he had still to goad himself into the firing line. "Curse on you!" he would say to himself when the order to charge flashed along the ranks. "Would you die a free

man, or live and go back to serfdom?" And in the mêlée, when the bullets, like a roof of death, came lower and lower down over him, he had to repeat the adjuration, "Curse on you, would you live forever?"

It was the Champagnard peasant's version of Turenne's adjuration to his own terror on the morning of Nordlingen, "Tu trembles, carcasse, et tu tremblerais davantage si tu connaissais où je te porte."

II

In the group of veterans and conscripts nearest to the tree under which Pierre Lestocq was lying, the talk of Jena had fizzled out most rapidly.

A short, lean, merry-eyed infantryman pronounced its epitaph:

"Jena! Nom de Dieu, what I want to know is when *le petit bougre* means to sign this peace and let us see France again?"

He was a Picard, wiry and agile as a monkey, and as ugly.

"Yes," said another, "we'll celebrate his Jena in Montmartre—when we get there."

Wooden huts and white tents dotted the ground for a circuit of a mile. On the flat roof of a granary built of brick, to the left of the bivouac fire, officers' linen was drying. A quarter of a mile away, close to one of the streamlets into which the Danube at this part divides, stood a saw-mill. Now and then the grenadiers round the fire looked lazily in its direction, watching the automatic motions of their comrades lifting a tree-trunk, holding it to the saw and then flinging down the planks. On the sand beside the Picard a piece of rusty sheet-iron served as a trencher for several haunches of raw horseflesh. These were cut into shreds and dropped from time to time into the savoury mess stewing in front of him.

Lifting the lid of a saucepan the Picard made a comic grimace, replaced it, and, poking a conscript in the ribs, demanded:

"It's seven months to-day since I left Joinville. Why don't you go and make *le petit bougre* come to terms with these accursed Austrians? But its *le petit bougre's* way," he went on philosophically. "He knows what passes in a soldier's mind; he knows what we can and what we cannot do; yes, and how much we can bear. Nom de Dieu, at Boulogne just when every man of us spat at the sight of salt water, piff! comes the word,—Not to London this time, mes enfants—but to the Danube and Vienna! That's his way. Oh, he's great, great and sudden!"

He turned to his saucepans, hissing between his teeth a parody of the *Ça ira:*

"Bloody your bayonets, brothers,
Bloody your bayonets, ho!
Bloody your bayonets, brothers,
Or down to hell you'll go."

Napoleon's armies had ceased to sing the great songs of the Revolution but under the parodies the tunes and something of the old inspiration smouldered.

"Shut up!" cried a good-looking Gascon, raising himself on his elbow and surveying the Picard angrily. "Can't you let a fellow sleep?"

A girl's voice between two neighbouring tents interrupted the altercation: "Plums, ripe plums! Apples and apricots and peaches."

She was a Viennese, blonde-haired and blue-eyed, a favourite with the twenty-third. She wore the long *redingote anglaise* then fashionable in every class; her smiling face looked out from the depths of her huge cylindrical hat like a pixie's from the bottom of a well. She had neither the vivacity nor the effrontery of the French *vivandière* and now

as though fatigued she put down her basket and began to fasten a shoe-strap. A pattern in crimson silk was worked on her black stockings.

There was an instant rush to her assistance; hustled, breathless, laughing, blushing, she sat down and let a dozen hands adjust her shoe.

Yet the fruit did not sell. Dysentery was in the camp, and an order of the day had forbidden the consumption of any fruit except that served out as rations. Lotte was turning away in a pique; but one of Letort's dragoons caught her waist and attempted to reach the red lips at the bottom of the cylindrical cap. The grenadiers, who regarded Lotte as their perquisite, sprang to their feet.

"Bayonet him! Nom de Dieu! Does he think Lotte's a sack of beans for his horse? À la lanterne!"

The marching song of the men accompanying a waggon of wheat to the granary diverted them and they joined lustily in the refrain:

"Marie, trempe ton pain,
Marie, trempe ton pain,
Marie, trempe ton pain,
Dans l'eau claire."

It reminded them of Paris; for it was Jouy's own travesty of the most famous scene in *La Vestale*. Suddenly the homesick chorus stopped.

"Thunder, what's that?"

It was a bugle: the sound rose a mile away, clear and sweet, cleaving the morning stillness.

Had Bessières, the commander of the Guard, unexpectedly returned? The grenadiers strained their eyes through the mists. A gunner, with stern eyes and well-cut features, seated in the waggon, stood up on the shafts and stared also through the fog.

Again the bugle-call rose, sharper, more threatening

and much nearer; and instantly, to the right and to the left, it was answered; nearer and yet nearer came other answering calls, that sprang, as it were, from the very earth close beside the excited men. And now towards the Danube, across the levels, human figures were seen running between the tents towards a certain point. The gunner sprang from the shaft, spat on the ground, and putting his hands to his mouth, rent the air with a yell:

"Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!"

He sprang forwards. Every man followed. In an instant the black sanded flat about the tents was a desert. The Picard glanced frantically from his saucepans to his flying comrades; darted after them for a yard or two, then back again to his saucepans; but at the blast of a trumpet that to his ears seemed like the trumpet of the Judgment Day, he thrust the pans firm in the flames, jammed on the lids, and rushed with the others.

They did not rush far; for yonder, enhaloed, as it were, by those trumpet-calls as by a rainbow arch of glory rising above him, yonder sat Napoleon, tranquil, on the white charger Solyman.

He was wearing the famous grey coat, old as his hat, its flaps dropping below his spurs—the coat that on winter nights in Poland they had seen whirled about him by the blast, wrinkled and white with ice and frozen snow.

Before the Emperor had uttered a word every man knew that the wish of his heart was fulfilled. Their war-weariness was ended; their homesickness cured. The Peace had been signed.

Chasseurs and fusiliers, light horse and heavy guns, voltigeurs cuirassiers, lancers, sappers, gunners, grenadiers, and pontoonists—yonder he sat, the realization of each man's wish personified. Companies and squadrons, tumbling out of workshops, mills, booths, from wooden bar-

racks or from canvas tents, fell into their places, fastening bandoliers or straps—a thick wall, a field crested with gleaming brass or crested with shakos, with black hair or crimson aigrettes or feathered hats.

III

Pierre Lestocq, the sick grenadier, got slowly on his feet. The transport, the joy throbbing around him, affected him: but it affected him as the cry "Fight on!" might affect the soldier who has got his death-wound, and knows it. Yes, he was dying; but, by God, he was glad to have lived, and Napoleon—the religion in which he *had* lived—was yonder! Everlasting rest—the religion in which he could now die—that too was near.

And north, west, south, and east, at Znaim, Gratz, Brünn, Linz were his co-religionists—the legions to whom Bonaparte was as a fate, the legions whose devotion was to him not less as a fate—a religion, that is to say, a wish, an ideal, a purpose, a watchword, for which a man is prepared to fight to the death, name it "Liberty," name it "France," or simply "the greatness of man."

Pierre listened, dazed, breathless; imagining rather than seeing the Emperor's face. Shout after shout rent the air.

"Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!"

A vast silence followed. Napoleon was speaking. At first, for the beating of his arteries, Pierre could not hear a syllable.

Again, an immense shout, a shout of passionate, long expected joy and deliverance; then once more an abrupt and complete silence. The Emperor had raised his voice, and, listening intently Pierre could distinguish the shrill, raucous Corsican accent softened by distance. Napoleon, as always, was speaking rapidly, not rising in his stirrups, as when he made a harangue to his army or distributed the

eagles in the Place de Carrousel, but sitting well down in his saddle. Nevertheless, the unpremeditated sentences ordered themselves into cadences.

"Soldiers! Your standards in the spring of this year flew from Paris to the walls of Vienna in thirty-one days. You fought on your march eleven pitched battles and twenty-seven combats. You scattered or destroyed an army of five hundred thousand men who, whilst you in Spain were hunting the English leopards to the sea, had dared to insult your frontiers. Soldiers! To-morrow you return to Paris and to France. Will your journey in peace be more rapid than that by which you marched across your defeated enemy to Vienna?"

Many did not at once seize the point; but in an instant the insinuation that they had marched through the ranks of their enemies as if they were nothing leapt from mouth to mouth. The soldiers burst into a roar of enthusiasm and laughter, amid which the cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" rose piercingly, like joyous sword-points flung on high.

A sarcasm, taunting but indignant, at the perjury and perfidy of the Habsburgs followed. God's vengeance had struck Austria down, Napoleon said, and then by three or four rapid touches the campaign was made to live before the soldiers' eyes.

"In April you fought five battles in five days. It is named the campaign of Ratisbon. In May you scattered at Aspern and at Essling an army of a hundred and eighty thousand men."

And then he cited incidents of the fight and of the weeks at Lobau; but individual names were not mentioned; he was speaking to the army, and the deeds of the army made his theme. Yet, as if under compulsion, he named his stepson, Eugène. In June, on the anniversary of Marengo, Eugène had gained the victory of Raab. Twelve days later at Gratz, the 84th regiment had displayed a heroism not sur-

passed in the annals of war. There, for fourteen hours, Gambini, with only seven hundred bayonets, had held at bay an army of ten thousand Croats.

"Such are your victories. And in the pause between those victories your engineers astonished the world by erecting in fifteen days three bridges across the broadest, deepest, and swiftest river of Europe. Our detractors have taunted us with the bridges of Cæsar and of Trajan. But the bridge which in four days Cæsar threw across the Rhine could not have borne the weight of a single gun. Your bridge of sixty arches across the Danube was broad enough to permit three carriages to cross abreast, and yet strong enough to support the weight of four hundred cannon. But, they say, you are not the first. Trajan too, they allege, threw a bridge across the Danube. In this your detractors speak history; but though he chose a point where its course is slow and its banks narrow, it yet took the Roman engineers three years to build it. You built your bridge in three weeks! Who henceforth shall dare to compare the bridges of Cæsar and Trajan with that structure of yours which rose with the solidity of iron and the speed of fire in order that my legions might cross it to their harvest of glory on the fields of Wagram and Znaim?"

The tumult became a frenzy, enthusiasm passing and returning, replicated from man to man; tears, laughter, cries; men gesticulated; men embraced each other, or stood apart, silent and unmoving as trees.

Pierre Lestocq, in a zigzag line, staggered forward. He was now trembling in every limb; in all his frame was a mortal faintness, a mortal lightness. He reached the stem of a second tree and then a third. The trodden grass, the listening crowd, the distant hills, Napoleon's face, all disappeared. It was the *pas de charge* of the Guard that he heard. Napoleon was leading them. A glory was in the air. He stood fiercely erect. Heroisms and splendours

flamed around him. Life's greatness had closed in a wrestle with death's greatness.

"Vive l'Empereur!" he shouted between his clenched teeth, and like a suffocating sob, the echo "Vive l'Empereur!" died in his throat.

His head dropped on his breast; he struggled against the engulfing darkness, and, as in a light-halo, he saw again Napoleon's forehead, the seat and very throne of god-like power and will.

"Vive l'Empereur!" he shouted.

Death was grasping at his face. There was a sound in his ears as of up-rushing waters; a sensation in his brain as if innumerable curtains of darkness were closing in upon him, like an enemy with rapid and precipitate rushes. Still struggling, he sank, stiffening himself out on the earth, his shoulders propped on the tree trunk.

Meanwhile the immense silence had again come down upon the listening soldiers. The Emperor had resumed his harangue.

"Thus to your past glories you have added this glory—the right to have it said of you by your country and by posterity, 'He was of the Army of the Danube and of Germany.' They shall point to the trophies of this war, to that enduring monument now rising in your city, that city which is already the capital of the world, a monument forged from the cannon captured on the fields of Ratisbon, Eckmühl, Aspern-Essling, and Wagram; they shall point out to each other objects of art that shall adorn your public buildings, and they shall say, 'These are the spoils of perjured Austria!'"

Suddenly Napoleon's voice changed. The pallid mask of his face remained unaltered; but his eyes, blue now as the blue of the sky reflected in sword blades, filmed, and their look became blacker and intenter. In the silence the champing of a horse's bit was as distinct as though that

packed arena were an empty hall, or a reaped field across which a peasant was trudging in the morning stillness to his day's work, and in that awed silence were heard the words, stern, yet cadenced like a lament:

"Soldiers! On your homeward march you will pass the graves of your comrades. Salute them as I salute them. They sleep the sleep of their glory. Their names shall stand on the monuments of their country. You yourselves by your bivouac fires have told their history. Their deeds are graven forever in the memories of men. Many things pass; glory such as this endures. In age after age, when the living shall most wish to live greatly and to feel and to speak greatly, they shall single out your actions and the actions of your dead comrades and find that greatest life in the praise of your battles."

The hush of awe, the tears, the surprise, the silence of stupor, then the frantic burst of shouting, attested the power which, after ten years, Napoleon's "fire-streaming words," as Grillparzer described them, still possessed over the French mind. The awe which had stilled the listeners was an awe at once for the living who spoke and for the dead who had died for him. A funeral cortège followed by the grey spectres of the fallen had seemed to pass—yet what a splendour environed it!

Napoleon's bulletins and his harangues might exaggerate or distort the achievements of his armies, but they were winged in every word with the heroism which had won them. The man who had the genius to win their battles had also the genius to describe them.

Satisfied with the effect, Napoleon turned his horse, and, surrounded by his suite, rode slowly towards Schönbrunn.

IV

Yet crowds, as though Napoleon and his white charger were still there, lingered about the spot; then slowly in knots

of two and three or ten and twelve began to disperse, commenting on the peace, guessing at its terms, commenting on the harangue; excited, laughing, gesticulating. The eyes of many were wet. A few were sombre and silent.

Amongst the first to fly back to his saucepans and the bivouac fire, was the Picard.

"Did I not tell you?" he cried excitedly. "Just as at Austerlitz. That's *le petit bougre's* way. You think you are going to Peking or to Moscow? Piff! The word is Paris! 'Baisons, enfans de la patrie!' Nom de Dieu! Where's my frying-pan? Oh that hell's pup dragoon . . ."

The saucepans were still there but the frying-pan was gone. Incredulous, he searched frantically in every direction; he did not seem to have been absent five seconds.

Hot and flurried, now erect, now stooping, "Jules! Pierre!" he called. "What the devil—! Why don't you answer?"

Jules was invisible.

The Picard glanced swiftly at the figure of Pierre Lestocq outstretched in his long grey coat, his shoulder against the tree, his heavy cap thrown forwards on his brow. His left arm hung loose. A dead leaf had fallen between the thumb and finger of his right hand. He did not stir. It was impossible to see his expression, but the attitude was that of deep rest.

"Asleep, and the Emperor speaking! *Fichtre*, that's odd!"

Ferretting everywhere, his eyes at last caught sight of the frying-pan thrown under the flap of a tent door; but its savoury contents were gone. Gone too was Lotte, gone the three evil-looking camp-followers, two male, one female, who like gnomes had seemed to emerge from the earth during the soldiers' first absorption in Napoleon's presence. Could the thieves have been those two bitches?

His face cleared a little. If it were not the cavalry who had the laugh on him, it would matter less.

The crowd rapidly thickening round the fire gave him little time to pursue his investigations. Some demanded food, some drink, some tobacco; some took snuff; all talked.

The inmost meaning of the incident alone was endurable.

"The Peace!"

Yesterday it had seemed a commonplace, a certainty, each man's secret wish; to-day it seemed a miracle, an incredible thing, because it had happened. Time was needed to understand it. And already the bitterness which in life lurks at the bottom of every sweetness was making itself felt.

"Peace? And for how long? To France to-morrow; but how long to stay there?"

France and the army had been promised peace after Austerlitz, and within three months there was war with Prussia; they had been promised peace after Jena, and within one month there was war with Russia; they had been promised a long, a sure, a lasting peace after Tilsit, and within seven months there was war with Spain; and from the Sierras they had hurried to the Danube.

"But this time?"

Jacques Dupont, the gunner with the stern eyes and finely cut features, and two grenadiers came back to the fire. The Picard, for reasons of his own, said nothing about the frying-pan. The four sat down.

"Our Emperor has pluck," said the gunner, "that's what I like in him. Intrépidité—that is his name! And I am just beginning to take in his idea, to realize his plan. Gigantesque—mais oui! Paris the capital of Europe. The old families not our enemies; and other nations, Spaniards, Germans, Swedes, Russians, Poles, Magyars, not our enemies either, but competitors with France in the race for glory.

Not birth any longer—no matter whether you are noble or peasant, German or Finn—manhood and genius is the thing—all is one in the race for glory. Nom de Dieu, but it's gigantic! And, by God, he may succeed."

Jacques Dupont was a Norman, transferred after Ratisbon from Davout's corps to the Old Guard. He had the authentic Viking look, rather tall, erect, lean and sinewy, with steel-blue eyes, close-cut hair, tightly shut cruel mouth, forced into prominence by the cheek-strap. After General Dupont's surrender at Bayleu he had, in the universal stupefaction and loathing, wished to change his name; but recognizing the futility of such a disguise, he had determined to wipe out that disgrace by his own actions, and, by his own valour, to restore the lustre of the name he bore. He loved glory as the Picard loved a breakfast; he was as certain of promotion as the Picard was certain to remain in the ranks. As a matter of history, he came out of the carnage of Leipzig four years later as the captain of this same company.

"Where do you and I come in, and the rest of us—that's what I want to know?" the Gascon grumbled. "Your great man—it's all very well; but where's his greatness without us? That puzzles me. He's Emperor, lives in a palace——"

"And we shiver in a hut on rotten straw when we can get it?" Dupont said quietly. "That's right enough: the thing is to sleep sound. He's Emperor, but he can't eat more'n three meals a day."

The others listening, nodded acquiescence, yielding to his natural authoritativeness.

"Nom de Dieu, yes," the Picard joyously asseverated, "but you are a savant, Jacques. That's well said."

And happiness and excitement raising his mind to an unaccustomed height, he went on,—"He can eat no more'n we do, that's flat—and one girl's like another, and with

her he can do no more'n you or me. It's funny, oh, it's funny! That's fraternity and equality, I call it. And they say now there's neither a heaven nor a hell—just nothing. Nom de Dieu! 'Marie, trempe ton pain, ah! ah! ah! dans l'eau claire!'"

"Where's Pierre?" Dupont asked in his quiet, commanding way. Contrast had drawn him to the Champagnard.

"Can't you see? Yonder—asleep. Poor devil. He has earned it. A bayonet in his shoulder-blade, then typhus—he's had his guts' full!"

The grenadiers looked in the direction indicated. The new-comer, an old "brave" of tipsy habits, illiterate, dirty, but with the cross, looked longer than the rest.

"Pierre's lying rather queer," he said, getting up. "How long's he been like that?"

He had seen dead men lie thus on many battlefields.

But before the Picard could answer four cavalrymen, arm in arm, came swinging along, their spurs jingling pleasantly. Their company was to move towards Linz next day: now the order was countermanded. The Picard eyed them suspiciously, but there was not a trace of mockery or irony on their fine faces. No: the two drabs of camp-followers, not the dragoons, had stolen his mess.

"Pierre! Pierre Lestocq!" one of the troopers called suddenly. "But this is good! Sacrebleu, I thought he had croaked at Mölk. Pierre, mon vieux, Pierre, old boy!"

Two of them, as their accent proved, came from the same province; the first speaker from the same village as Pierre. Bending over him, he put his hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"Pierre mon vieux . . ."

He started back. The grenadiers slouched slowly forward. All became unexpectedly silent. The old "brave" with the beery countenance knelt down beside Pierre.

"He's croaked," he said briefly and stood up, brushing the earth from his knees.

"Dead?"

In the surprise, accustomed as they were to death, a sound that came from the direction of Nussdorf or Vienna escaped their notice or left them unmoved. But a second sound came clearer and deeper. They looked at each other, then at the dead man.

"What's up now? What's that firing?"

There was no answer.

A staff officer on a fine English grey rode past. He turned his freckled, sunburnt face towards the group, surveyed it quietly and sped on. The hue of his uniform was lost in the mist on the road towards the city.

The grenadiers looked after him. What message was he carrying at that speed?

In the camp itself, to the promiscuous singing and shouting, a burst of military music was added, drums and bugles, clear and shrill; and all in the morning light, a sparkling squadron of Nansouty's cuirassiers, the October sun on their helmets and swords, trotted gaily across the level northward of the camp.

"I saw yesterday that Pierre had got his dose; yes, I did," the Picard asseverated. "I never believed he'd see the night through. Well, what's to be done now? He can't lie there. Here, lend a hand, boys!"

The dragoon, Pierre's fellow-villager, a big, soft-hearted fellow, stepped aside.

Six grenadiers, at the Picard's summons, came forward. Two planks were hastily constructed into a bier, and bending over the dead man, they lifted him to their shoulders, bearing him towards some wooden sheds that rose close to the river.

The last glittering sound of Nansouty's bugles and drums came softer and softer as the squadron moved towards Schönbrunn.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE TRACK OF A CRIME

I

THE court-martial for the trial of Friedrich Staps was to assemble in the arsenal that same afternoon, Saturday, the 14th October, at four o'clock. Complete secrecy was enjoined. No member of the commission was to be informed of its object until the prisoner was before his judges. The Emperor reserved to himself the right of confirming or annulling the sentence of the court.

A peremptory note from Napoleon had, at an early hour, instructed Savary to use every second of the interval in tracing out the movements of the accused since his arrival in Vienna. "The duc de Rovigo," ran the missive, "shall also endeavour to ascertain whether in the city itself, or in the surrounding villages, the prisoner has any relatives, friends or acquaintances who may have acted as his abettors if not as his accomplices."

There was a postscript.

"The duc de Friuli shall have access to the prisoner at any hour."

This at once alarmed Savary. Duroc, "the man who never shed a tear," was, nevertheless, a Don Quixote in the devices he invented for the mitigation of Bonaparte's severities. This command could only mean the Emperor's intention of pardoning his assailant.

Disturbed and irritated, Savary determined to take the first part of the work in hand personally. At Schönbrunn, especially since the middle of August, he had felt himself and his work to be under surveillance. His most trusted agents had been tampered with—either by Fouché, anxious to countermine his mines, or by the Emperor himself, infected with the disease of setting one army of spies to watch another in every capital city and in every camp or headquarter of Europe.

"But in this business," thought Savary, "I will see with my own eyes, hear with my own ears."

He at once despatched a courier to Rapp requesting him to meet him at the arsenal at ten o'clock.

Meantime, he summoned his confidential chief and with him went over the results of the investigations pursued during the night. The prisoner's account of himself had been verified. A young man answering his description had lodged for ten days at the *Goldener Adler* inn near Nussdorf. Two witnesses had seen him on the Schönbrunn road, another had observed him in a small café in Vienna. Several additional clues had been followed up; four arrests had been made; but the police had discovered nothing that really implicated the detained persons in the dastardly crime.

Savary looked up sharply from a dossier he was examining.

"These arrested persons," he demanded, "do they know why they have been arrested?"

The chief, who had the dress and beard if not the countenance of a Greek merchant, answered by a mournful reproachful shake of the head. How could his master imagine that after so many years he would neglect so rudimentary a precaution?

"You have done well," Savary replied, imitating Napoleon's manner.

His attention once more riveted itself to the dossier.

II

"Fanatic or hired agent, this young fool is unfit to live," he said impatiently to Rapp when, an hour later, they met at the arsenal. "No recanting should get him a pardon. His brain will become a magazine of lies—against you, me, or any one. He will have our reputations and even our lives in his power."

Rapp's considerate but not very penetrating glance rested on Savary's close-set, foxy eyes; then, averting itself, wandered to the iron gloom of the arsenal walls.

"His majesty is not such an ass," he said bluffly. "Why should he suspect you or me?"

Savary did not deign to answer, and, after a rapid explanation of his design, and a sketch of the story of a French noble in search of a young German as a "courier" on a journey to Pomerania or some other foggy region, he and Rapp proceeded to the Burgplatz to hire a carriage.

Both officers wore forage caps and the undress uniform of colonels of the Guard, without orders or decorations.

In the "Old City" the streets were thronged. Rumours of the Peace had already spread.

In the square before the royal palace workmen with their sleeves rolled up were piling upon carts and barrows wreathes and evergreens, shrubs and flowers. They were the decorations of last night's ball.

French sentinels with bayonets fixed still marched to and fro in front of the main entrance.

A row of hackney coaches stood in front of the garden railings. The drivers, seeing the two officers on foot, began to wave their long whips. The lean wretched-looking horses, "too lean even for soup," stood with drooping heads. Their sides were striped with red flesh. The sinews of their necks were in places uncovered and looked like raw wounds.

Savary, after haggling over the fare, engaged the likeliest hack.

"Let me sit this side, may I?" Rapp asked, taking the left-hand corner of the carriage. "My right arm this morning aches like hell."

Every officer in the army knew of the sabre-cuts in Rapp's right arm and of Napoleon's famous remark.

"It is this Danube air," Savary answered. "I too begin to feel rheumatic."

III

Their enterprise was not without danger. In the northern villages Vandamme's savagery had made the French unpopular. Stragglers disappeared with a frequency which only murder could explain. Nussdorf, the chief "river-port" for two hundred miles, was crowded with loafers and fugitives from justice or from injustice—Slavs, Magyars, Poles, Croats, Slovaks, Serbs, Roumanians.

"If the Emperor wishes this to be a real secret," Rapp observed as they reached the open country, "he acted very unadvisedly in writing so precipitately to Fouché. Everything shows that this youngster had neither confidant nor accomplice."

"You never can tell," Savary said with a shrug.

He began to busy himself with his notes.

Even at this early hour, outside Vienna, knots of villagers or citizens in holiday attire succeeded each other on the highway. And now in the city from which they were receding the bells were ringing—the boom of St. Stephen's huge bell, heard by the Turks two centuries ago; the mellow-toned St. Eustathius; St. Peter's in the Graben; and finally St. John's.

"One would suppose these damned Germans had conquered us, not we them," Savary said morosely; and he

turned back and looked at the city which in the morning light spread in tranquil loveliness to right and left.

Rapp's Alsatian blood resented the remark, as well as the tone in which Savary made it. It seemed intended to wound.

"The truth will out," he said curtly. "We are afraid to remain a day longer." And touched by a vague sentiment he let his eyes wander over the Wiener woods.

Everywhere as they drove northwards they encountered the traces of war and the destruction wrought by war—the red gashes in the soil dug by artillery; the fire-blackened gables of roofless farms; a deserted hamlet; a squalid assemblage of huts named a "field-hospital," and at the doors of the huts or in a trodden field, a few wretches, maimed or sick, crawled to stare at the noise of their wheels.

"It is war; yes, it is war," Rapp thought and shrugged aside the temptation to think.

Savary, his right arm along the edge of the carriage, was sitting with knit brows, his note-book in his left hand. Whenever the two men were together the difference in their temperaments was certain to assert itself. Rapp despised the "police de caquetage" and was already bored by this morning's business. Savary was in his element. His ambition was on the alert. If this incident got out of his hands what capital might not Fouché make of it? But if he succeeded——

To Napoleon, Savary had long ago become, in the Jesuit phrase, "like a stick in the hands of a man," and the gloom of his nature made him naturally the executor of his master's baser will. His fidelity was his ugliest virtue. "At a word from me Savary would stab to the heart his own father." The mot had been coined by Talleyrand, but it expressed Napoleon's conviction.

As the carriage bent away from the Danube, the roofs

of Nussdorf were visible on their right. Savary in a very short time ordered the carriage to stop, and, dismounting, dismissed the driver and the two officers proceeded on foot to a picket stationed a quarter of a mile away where Vandamme's main body had, to avoid the fever, been quartered on the high ground. They enquired the way to the *Goldener Adler*. The sentry pointed to a few houses hidden by trees less than a mile distant. A shorter road ran across the open fields.

They crossed two fields, and all at once found themselves in a country lane.

"This does not look the place where a murder would be planned," Rapp observed.

Savary seemed not to have heard the remark.

The air all round was sweet, as though gardens or scented wild-flowers were near; behind, on the wooded heights, the noonday stillness brooded. In front some grey strata of quiet clouds slept on the horizon. The hedgerow on their right rose through a spreading undergrowth of brambles and hemlock to a height of eight feet; here and there a solitary spray of woodbine gleamed in safe inaccessibility. Near its farther end the lane passed a coppice of hazel and birch, the haunt of nightingales in summer; and through a gap on the left they saw a meadow where, in times of peace the kine would have been ruminating udder-deep in the lush grass. To-day these meadows were a tangled wilderness of dead nettles and fennel. Half a mile away, on the last spur of the Wienerwald, was a herd of goats, watched by a boy, whilst full in front, clearly visible in irregular lines of white walls, red tiles, or thatched roofs, straggled the village they were seeking.

IV

A walk, or rather a march, of a few minutes brought them out in front of the *Goldener Adler*. Its sign-board, the

double-headed Austrian eagle, gold upon a russet ground, swung unmoving above the rusty, weather-beaten porch. The garden spread in a luxuriance of weeds behind the house; in front, on a patch of grass, a deserted dove-cot, rotten and falling to pieces, stood on the top of a pole; near it, a heap of refuse and two dismantled carts.

A more evil-looking hostelry could hardly be imagined, even in Austria. Murder might have here its fixed residence. Trap doors inside, a secret passage or two, and beyond it, the broad tide of the Danube that would sweep away every trace of the crime forever.

"This looks just like the house in which a murder might be *done*, eh, mon ami?" Savary said sourly.

It was his answer to Rapp's remark in the lane.

Rapp looked at him, but did not retort; for before his eyes had arisen the figure of a German boy, footsore and weary, turning aside after a long day's tramp to seek rest in this lonely inn. "Mon Dieu," he asked himself, "meditating murder, did he select for his last halting-place a house that seemed dedicated to murder?"

Savary, meanwhile, had tapped sharply on the door with his sword-hilt.

There was no answer.

"Are you sun-struck?" he asked Rapp; then, coming up close to him, he whispered: "A word of counsel. There is no sense in showing too much policy merely to be told lies. A little manly maladroitness often elicits the truth. You take my meaning?"

There was shrewdness in Savary's estimate of his companion. Conscious of his own frankness, Rapp was just the man to throw off his natural manner, and, aiming at over-subtlety, ruin all.

"I will obey, monsieur le duc," he answered with ironic ceremoniousness.

At the end of a dark passage they found the guest-room,

raftered with oak, low, badly lighted, and smelling of stale tobacco and beer. A grimy wooden crucifix rose in a corner; a cup of holy water stood at the door. Above the fireplace there were outlined two clean spaces where two fowling-pieces had once hung. The edict of disarmament had extended even to such weapons. The stillness was unbroken even by the buzz of a fly.

Savary's second imperative knock on the wooden table was answered after a time by the sound of heavy footsteps, and the landlord appeared.

He looked from one to the other of his two guests. A cunning expression came into his eyes, and his mouth, clean-shaven, with a long, hateful-looking upper lip, closed abruptly, as though only the "iron pear" would open it again.

"At your service, genltemen. What can I do for you?"

Savary, instantly taking in his gaol-bird appearance, and judging it impolitic to pretend to have entered such a hostelry for food or drink or lodging, stated his errand briefly.

"Stabbs?" the landlord muttered, seeming to search his mem ry, "Stabbs? Donnerwetter, what sort of a name is that? Ach, der knabe—Friedrich Stips? Him I know; yes-s, nice lad; quiet as a mouse."

Savary, as though inadvertently, moved his hand to the hilt of his sword.

He had stayed at the inn, the landlord continued, some eight days, no, ten—yes, from a Wednesday to a Friday he had paid his bill. He had no friends in Vienna that he knew of, and he received no letters; but he had seen him writing; he had also heard him reciting to himself like a play-actor.

"What then brought him here? Has he a sweetheart in Nussdorf or in the neighbourhood? Did he frequent women?"

"A sweetheart? Women? What am I that I should know what company my guests keep outside my house? I am too busy, your honours."

But interrupting himself,—"Ja, ich komme; coming! coming!" he unexpectedly shouted, and without a word of apology, going to the door, he answered along the dismal passage questions that no one had asked and gave orders that obviously had no meaning in this place, or a meaning that the two officers were not intended to understand.

"Why then did he come to Vienna?" Savary insisted in bad German, but affecting the Viennese accent. "Erfurt is a hundred and twenty miles away."

"Does he come from Erfurt way?" was the cunning rejoinder. "Your worships know more of him than I do."

Savary saw that he had made a false move.

"We must loosen this dog's tongue," he said in French, turning brusquely from the landlord. "For if he does not speak we shall have to arrest him, and the affair will be in every pot-house throughout Austria to-morrow."

He ordered wine and the two officers sat down.

V

During the landlord's absence Savary began a stealthy examination of the apartment. A sign from Rapp stopped him. Through a small square hole cut in the wall, a pair of jet-black eyes, hard and bright as steel, were watching every movement of Savary's.

The sight of those eyes gave Rapp a feeling distinctly unpleasant. On the track of murder, they might in this lonely neighbourhood find themselves the victims of murder. Why had they ever started upon this useless enterprise without an escort? Why had Savary's over-caution dismissed the carriage and left them unprotected in this cut-throat's den? And for the second time that morning

he remembered the frequency with which Vandamme's stragglers disappeared in this very neighbourhood.

The landlord returned with a bottle of wine, ostentatiously wiping away the dust and cobwebs with a dirty cloth.

Savary invited him to drink.

"You are far from rivals," he said civilly. "Has the war interfered with your trade?"

"Not much to complain of, my prince. Times are hard; but, for my own part, I am very contented and very happy," was the answer. And with a kind of insolent familiarity, mixed with deference, he began to expatiate on the war, on duty to the fatherland, the greatness of the French Emperor; but also on the greatness of Austria, and above all, on the greatness of Carinthia and its capital, the ancient city of Klagenfurth—"The waterfalls of the Mürr are the gates of Paradise."

Rapp was interested. To Savary, however, this garrulity did not seem natural; the patriotism was obviously false. It was all the talkativeness of a man who wished to gain time. For what?

"Where do you come from?" he asked, resuming his harsh and arrogant manner.

"Carinthia, my prince. The city of Klagenfurth, as I have just told you, gave me birth." And he began to dilate on his past life.

The inn-keeper, though not born at Klagenfurth, was a Carinthian, Fedor Zagnitz by name. His father and grandfather belonged to the race of mountaineers who, on the very edge of the Carnic glaciers, earn a savage livelihood as wood-cutters, rolling the pines down the mountain side into the waters of the Drave far below. But Fedor and his three brothers had tired of this life, and with a few kreutzers in their pockets had made for the plains. And after various adventures confessable or unconfessable in

Hungary and Styria, all four had ended as inn-keepers, two at Klagenfurth, one at Villach, the fourth, Fedor, the youngest, here at Nussdorf.

"How are we to bring this drôle to the point?" Savary asked in a French patois that he used in speaking to his police.

"Let us be frank with him," Rapp answered; and without waiting for Savary's assent, he stated their errand in his own way. They had come expressly to enquire into the character of this Friedrich Staps. The peace had been signed, and a French officer of great rank was setting out at once for Pommern, and desired a bright young fellow as his interpreter and courier. Staps had seemed a likely youth—what did the inn-keeper know of him?

"And is that all your errand?" the inn-keeper ejaculated, his black eyes glistening. "Why I thought you were princes; yes, and I saw myself as ambassador to Klagenfurth announcing the great Napoleon's clemency; yes, and I saw my two brothers' faces yellow with envy as they eyed me. 'Thunder,' they would say, 'is not Fedor still the lucky penny of the family?'"

He sprang to his feet with a wild laugh, and swinging to the window, stood biting his nails and staring through the dirty panes; then, as though by chance, he flung himself on a stool immediately between his guests and the door.

The criminal in him appeared uncaged, yet Rapp observed that his eyes, even when standing by the window, watched every motion of Savary's; he observed too the fellow's powerful wrists, the black hair coming down the arm to the very knuckles, suggesting wild beast strength and agility.

Savary, who with difficulty had curbed his temper, got on his feet; but Rapp, made cool by the danger, adhered to the plan agreed upon.

"What have you to say? This lad should begin his

duties and start on his journey to-night, or to-morrow at daybreak—unless, of course, we discover from you anything to his discredit."

The inn-keeper's insolent mocking glance rested alternately on the two Frenchmen; and thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, he asked leisurely,—"And it is a long journey—this that His Highness your friend is going upon?"

The thought darted simultaneously through Rapp's mind as well as Savary's—"This ruffian knows of Staps's arrest." There was no mistaking the emphasis that had been laid on the words "a long journey."

Savary's chagrin was extreme.

He saw his whole scheme crumble; he saw Staps reprieved, or Germany by his death furnished with a martyr immeasurably more pathetic than Schill or Palm; he saw Fouché's triumph; whilst he himself was further removed that ever from the Ministry of Police.

"It is no business of Fedor Zagnitz," the landlord resumed; "but the lad is—sickly, as you might say, and if your great friend were travelling, say towards the Tyrol——"

"We should not want a German," Savary interposed in a voice thick with the emotion against which he was contending.

"No, of course not, my prince," was the startling retort. "You'd find plenty of Germans—Bavarians, for instance, on the spot—dead, if not living, eh? eh? Plenty of Germans, ha! ha!"

The outburst of savage hate astounded Rapp. Did this hideous rage express the true feeling of Germany for France? Had he been in error in imagining that the young Thuringian had no active accomplices "save God"? Or was the hate masked in this brutish peasant's breast an example of all Germany?

But the inn-keeper, as though contented with this taunt-

ing allusion to the Franco-Bavarian surrender in the preceding summer, now changed his bearing. Probably he himself had been working out the situation, and tacitly gave up the enterprise against two officers of distinction as "risky."

"You asked about women, did you not?" he remarked, with a show of friendliness. "Well, the lad had a sweetheart. I have so many cares, but my memory comes back to me now. Well, as I was saying, I came one day into the lad's room. I found him weeping over a maiden's picture and sitting with his arms like this."

The host laid both his arms flat down on the table and buried his face in the sleeve of the right.

"Ah—who was the girl? Was she of Vienna?" Savary asked indifferently.

"I cannot tell; he never spoke of her, mon prince, never a word."

But he described the miniature and gave it as his opinion that the maiden was not of Vienna or the neighbourhood.

"He had the look of a lost dog," he jerked out at length. "Why should a lad look like that if his maiden were near?"

Savary nodded, but put some further questions.

Not another word, however, could he extort, either by frankness or cunning.

"Is there any good in going on with this?" Rapp said in the patois already adopted by Savary. "We do not want a woman on our hands." And he added in German, "Our young friend will suit the appointment."

"I am not satisfied," Savary said slowly. "The Tugendbund has women in its ranks. This drôle may know more of her than he pretends. Put a question or two about the Illuminati—but carefully."

Rapp stifled the wish to ask Savary to put such futile questions himself. His honest, soldierly intelligence led him to see in all such associations as the Illuminati and

the Tugendbund "mere moonshine," or at best conspiracies to which Savary's or Fouché's police for their own ends gave a factitious importance.

"The Illuminat?" the landlord exclaimed. "Thunder! What's them? The Prince of Carinthia has often supped at brother's tavern in Klagenfurth; but he is a Serenity, not an Illuminat."

"Enough! Enough! Show me his room," Savary interrupted, annoyed by Rapp's laugh. "This is no time for jesting," he muttered with a scowl, when Rapp under his breath repeated, "A Serene Highness, but not an Illuminated Highness."

The host searched the leather pocket of his pantaloon and took out an iron ring garnished with keys.

Behind him the two officers climbed the rickety stair, covered like the inns of the period, with the filth of months or of years. On the fifth step Rapp turned, he knew not why, and saw on a wooden bench the outstretched figure of a man in the picturesque dirt affected by the Magyars. Further back in the gloom another figure in the same attire sat smoking. A peat fire smouldered on the hearth, and as he twirled his long moustaches he stared into the dull embers.

Rapp felt for his pistols, and, with a sense of relief, saw Savary make the same precautionary gesture.

VI

The room into which they were now ushered had a slanting roof, and they had to stoop in places not to knock their heads against the ceiling. Savary stood with the host. Rapp walked to the window. It was a dormer window and looked across a garden stocked with pear trees, plum trees, currant bushes, and beds still brilliant with marigolds and dahlias. A deal table, green with mould,

stood under a pear tree; a bird-cage swung from a branch, and in it a grey parrot sat blinking in the sunshine. Beyond the garden lay a level expanse of fields, and beyond the fields gleamed the Danube, broad as a lake, flashing silver and azure in the October sun.

"Yes," the host said, "the lad should make a good page to a man of condition. His habits, you see, were as dainty as a girl's."

Flinging back the chintz coverlet, he pointed to the sheets on Staps's bed, their dirt neatly covered by squares of white paper sewn to the under side.

"Down with the French! To hell with Napoleon!" screamed a weird voice, apparently at Rapp's elbow, and instantly the two officers wheeled round, pistol in hand.

"'Tis only the parrot," the landlord said with a sneering laugh. "We're quiet folks here."

Rapp and Savary stood listening.

"God bless the Pope! God's curse on Bonaparte!"

An eldritch scream followed, then total silence. But in a second or two the low jug-jug of a nightingale's song rose and terminated in another scream.

Savary stepped to the window. In a cage a few feet distant the parrot was sitting as if carved in stone, its head down, its right eye upturned, apparently deeply satisfied with the effect that it had produced.

"You have guests who do not love us, mine host?" Rapp observed jestingly. "Where did the parrot learn that singsong?"

"Ach, not so bad?" was the imperturbable answer. "What is one to do? Men of all sorts come here, from every port of the Danube between Donauworth and Rustchuk, and that's a thousand miles and more."

Savary continued to stare out of the window.

"Who is that?" he sharply asked. "And to whom is he signalling?"

"Ach, that?" the landlord said, coming up to the window. "That is poor Wilhelm. He got his dose at Aspern. He was bandaging one leg when whiff! comes a round shot and rips the flesh from the other. Both had to come off in hospital. But he got over it, God knows how. Better dead, I say. Wilhelm, however, does not take that view, and there he is! He used to sing as merry a song, tell as good a story as any man in Nussdorf, and he would stand his drink like a Suabian. Now he's queer. He's queer. I give him a crust for scaring the birds, and that shed to sleep in."

He pointed to a hovel of dank and rotting planks.

Near it, prone amongst the refuse and garbage, lay a monstrous figure, horribly mutilated, both legs amputated, waving a huge flapper with both hands; now and then a groan of fatigue or pain escaped him, and with a cry of baffled rage he would lie panting, the flapper inert. Crowds of starving birds sat watching for these intervals, perched on trees, on the wall, on the bushes, or fluttering along the ground.

"That too is war," Rapp thought, and looked at what to him resembled a monstrous caterpillar.

"He hates them birds," the host continued with hideous affability. "He used to be kind-hearted enough; but now, as I said, he's a bit wrong here," tapping his forehead. "Seems to make no difference: starling, finch, tit, redbreast or thrush, he hates 'em all."

"He must have had a black spot in him somewhere," Rapp said suddenly. "Never have I seen a man wounded in battle that did not come out of it a better man than he went in."

"Think so?" the landlord said, with his insolent good-nature. "Well, there's no saying. I've seen plenty just the other way."

Savary, who understood the drift of Rapp's remark,

looked at him in contemptuous surprise. Was this the place or the time for moralizing on war and peace?

But now, not less anxious to be rid of his visitors than his visitors to be safely out of this house, the landlord returned to the subject of Staps's habits.

"Was he religious? Was he an adherent of the Jesuits or other society?"

"Religious? He used to pray morning and night, if that's religion. There!" he said, pointing to a neat clean rug in front of the bed. "I have heard him at it when everybody else in the house was snoring. I used to pray myself, but that's long ago. God bless you, where's the good of it? A man of sense must pray to himself, aye, and answer his own prayers, or they'll never be answered. What do you think, monsieur?" he said, addressing Rapp. "You look as if you knew what's what. Why, when I was young, I tried all sorts of praying dodges; I prayed for this, I prayed for that; but never an answer, big or little. At Klagenfurth I prayed to God to give me two post-horses. Did I get 'em? Instead of getting my two post-horses, three of my cows sickened and died in one day. After that I stopped praying, and tried other ways of getting on in the world. But this made me notice the lad at his prayers. 'We're all alike when we are young,' says I to myself, 'and doubtless the lad is asking for things just as foolish as I asked at his age.'"

"Quite as foolish!" was Savary's grim retort.

He was thinking of Staps's asseveration that he had implored the divine guidance as to the murder of Napoleon, and to himself he thought, "To attack the master of a million troops and the dictator of Europe—certainly it wants God Almighty Himself!"

"Had he any clothes to be sent for?" Rapp asked, struck by a sudden thought.

"No clothes I ever saw but those on his back."

"Is he an educated lad? Had he books? His new master will like him to read aloud to him."

It was Savary who put this question.

"Yes," the landlord answered contemptuously, "he read a deal in books. I've got 'em downstairs. I took them out of his room for to keep them for him."

"Show them to me."

VII

A quarter of an hour later Rapp and Savary quitted the *Goldener Adler* and walked to the *Zwei Kronen*, the chief inn of Nussdorf. It was close to the wharves and overlooked the highroad from Brünn.

Savary visited the custom-house, but discovered nothing. He and Rapp crossed the river in a boat without a keel, which rolled excessively and increased Savary's sulkiness and contempt for Austrian civilization. His enquiries produced nothing fresh.

It was nearly two o'clock before they returned

As they re-crossed the river they heard in the distance the heavy thud-thud of guns. Savary looked at Rapp enquiringly, but Rapp knew no more than he did.

Napoleon had not waited for the signature of Francis II., but as though it were enough that he had affixed his seal to the Treaty, commanded Vienna, by the thunder of a hundred cannon, to rejoice at his magnanimity. The action also dispelled the rumours that the story of peace was a fake, and allayed the dangerous excitement rising in the city.

CHAPTER XII

AN EMPEROR AND HIS SECRETARIES

I

TO those about him an extraordinary elation marked Bonaparte's demeanour all that day, affecting them exactly as the proximity of a highly charged magnetic battery might have affected them—marshals, generals, officers of his suite, officers of the household, pages, aides-de-camp, secretaries, courtiers.

Berthier's face had an angry congested look, such as it wore only in days of battle, and he gave instructions or orders to his subordinates in a shrill and imperative voice, but with a slight stammer habitual to him in moments of great strain.

The Emperor himself since his return from the morning ride and the address to his Guards had betrayed nothing, and appeared to feel nothing but an overwhelming energy and capacity for work. His countenance was calm; in his eyes burned a fixed concentrated light. The oppression as well as the presentiments of the preceding days had dispersed. The apparitions of the past night might, he told himself again, have been an actuality, or they might have been merely a projection of his mind; the essential thing was that he had undergone the strangest ordeal that can affect the heart, and in that ordeal he had conquered. The outburst to Duroc had made clearer to himself masses of in-

choate ideas gathering in his mind for the past three months or the past three years. He had placed the actions of his manhood front to front with the dreams of his youth; the contradiction for a moment had appalled his reason and troubled his will; but the contradiction was only apparent for he had analysed his career stage by stage, and stage by stage he had justified that career.

"But all my career is mystery. How at such an hour as this can the superhuman fail to assert itself? The assassin's dagger may have prepared the way for the phantoms of the night. Who shall assign limits to the possible and the impossible?"

The whole incident, the epileptoid attack of the afternoon, the vigil, interrupted only by a couple of hours' sleep towards dawn, had left merely a painful hyperæsthesia. The most ordinary incidents got on his nerves. The evil odours which, at that period, lurked for several hours every morning about the corridors of every great house in Paris or Vienna nauseated him; but he surrounded himself with a cloud of eau de Cologne. The scratching of a quill, or a page hastily turned by one of his secretaries, exasperated him; but he refused to give way to these sensations.

"To work! To work!"

He repeated the phrase that day a hundred times. He seemed to seek forgetfulness and to find pride in the display of his prodigious energies, now liberated and functioning joyously. He seemed determined to push on every phase of his gigantic plans simultaneously—the fortification of Passau, of Antwerp, of Toulon, of Linz, of Ratisbon; the plans of campaign for his armies in Portugal and in Spain; the giving of a central impulse to the dislocated actions of Soult, Mortier, Victor, and St. Cyr; the canal joining the Seine to the Rhone; the canal joining the Meuse to the Rhine; public buildings in Paris, public buildings in Lyons;

the scheme to paralyse for ever Austria's unlimited issue of paper money.

He had begun immediately after the harangue to his troops; he had given elaborate instructions first to Berthier, then to Maret, then again to Berthier and later to Lauriston. He had eaten a hasty lunch and recommenced. From one to three o'clock he had dictated to Ménéval alone; at three he had called in the aid of Fain, now Ménéval's right-hand man; but, his activity generating new force, he had in a quarter of an hour summoned as secretaries two other aides-de-camp, Montesquiou and Bertrand, and finally Marbœuf, a good-looking, sinewy guardsman of two and twenty, son of the former commandant of Corsica, the early protector of Lætitia Bonaparte. He was now dictating to five secretaries at once.

At times Napoleon seemed to find a pleasure in displaying to others or in proving to himself the range of his faculties. To-day, however, his purpose in summoning five secretaries was practical. He wished to be out of Vienna and out of Germany; he wished to feel his own hand once more on the reins in Paris and throughout France. He wished to dispatch within twenty-four hours a mass of business and correspondence that in ordinary circumstances would have taxed even his powers of work to dispatch in forty-eight hours. He had an additional incentive—personal and moral. This display of conscious strength affected him somewhat as the visit to his grenadiers had affected him that morning. It gave him tranquillity—the tranquillity born of conscious and deliberate might. The death of Pierre Lestocq had moved him, and, yielding to an impulse, he had permitted a brief word from himself to be addressed to the regiment by its colonel,—"Your Emperor sympathizes with you in the loss of a comrade. His ardour to return to the standards made him quit the hospital before his wounds were healed. He was one of the brave."

II

Four o'clock had struck. In Napoleon's cabinet all was still vibrating energy, invention, intellect, and will. Ideas and plans hurtled in on his imagination more rapidly than he could find words to express them or find hands to take them down. Masses of them were flung out in rapid and elliptic utterances. These were seized by Ménéval and his trained subordinates, set down fragmentarily, recast, approved, or torn in shreds and redictated. At other moments Napoleon spoke in a low melancholy voice, as though obsessed by thoughts of a darker complexion; then again, gathering force, his words became rapid and vibrating; or he would suddenly cease his pacing of the floor, and, standing in total silence, he would tug with a spasmodic motion at the braid on the right sleeve of his coat, then after a second or two he would burst into a torrent of violent rhetoric, through which, however, a definite meaning forced itself. The scene and the hour suggested one other scene only, Condivi's vivid description of Michael Angelo's studio, the Titan figure at work in the twilight, the air filled with hot dust, chips, and fragments of marble flying from the chisel like sparks from the iron on the anvil.

Ménéval sat near the fireplace on Napoleon's left. Along side of Ménéval at a table by the south window sat Baron Fain. These had in charge the correspondence with Paris —with Clarke, Cambacérès, Decres, and even with Fouché. To Marbœuf were dictated the letters to subject or allied kings, to independent princes and other minor potentates of Germany. The two military secretaries, Montesquiou and Bertrand, occupied the opposite corner of the room on Napoleon's right. They were at this moment taking down the day's instructions for the generals in Spain—Soult, Gouvain St. Cyr, Augereau, and Suchet.

Napoleon in a pause glanced at the clock. It was twenty minutes past four.

The trial of the intended assassin, though not a man in that room except himself was aware of it, must now be ended. Savary might arrive at any moment to announce that Staps had made his recantation or had received his death-sentence.

"And why is Savary *not* already here?" he asked himself impatiently.

For a second or two he ceased dictating, and, apparently idle, stood in gloomy abstraction staring out on the scene in front, on the sinking October sun, the paths strewn with dead leaves, the broad squares of grass, the white statues niched in their walls of solid greenery. Beyond the Glorietta a flock of starlings passed in whirring flight. They were on their way from their feeding-grounds by the Danube to their homes in the Wienerwald. He turned abruptly aside and resumed his diagonal pacing of the room, glancing again at the clock.

In the oppressive silence Fain's slightly asthmatic breathing was unpleasantly marked. Ménéval's pen continued its steady scratching. His large, calm, bald forehead was held high above the sheet on which he was writing.

As though by any means to drown these irritations, Napoleon, without indicating the secretary to whom the order was addressed, exclaimed—"Send Poniatowski a sabre. I am not done with him and his horsemen. He is a Pole and will value such a gift from me; but strike out that clause about Warsaw. Poland has not yet proved her fitness for self-government."

Two secretaries lifted their heads at once, uncertain to whom the words were spoken; but knowing by instinct that Ménéval had taken the minute, Napoleon turned angrily to one of the two who had lifted their heads—it was Bertrand —"Demand of Daru what has become of the 34,000 pairs

of slippers and the 34,000 pairs of winter boots which he reported to me four days ago—yes, and the 45,000 shirts and the 9,000 gaiters destined for Trieste? Not a rag is to be left behind us. War is war. And command him at once to dispatch 50,000 rations of biscuit to Passau."

Bertrand jotted down the places and figures and began at once to outline the dispatch.

The Emperor glanced down a draft handed to him by Marbœuf.

"Good!" he said. "But why do you say, 'I write to Your Serene Highness to inform you—'? Why say 'I write'? Does His Serene Highness imagine that you are shouting down an ear-trumpet? Put simply, 'This is to inform Your Highness.'"

And turning to Bertrand, who had not yet finished the order to the governor of Vienna, Daru—he gave the unexpected command:

"Send for the Prince de Neuchâtel. When he enters, let Montesquiou and yourself correct or verify these instructions by my interview with him. Remain!" he said abruptly to Fain, who had risen to let Montesquiou pass. "Demand of Clarke" (his Minister of War at Paris) "why I have not yet received the detailed report on my order for 120,000 muskets on the model of 1777, and of my second order for 180,000 muskets No. 1 Republican."

"Les drôles!" he said to himself, taking a pinch of snuff. "Do they sleep in their chairs in Paris? To whom have you now come?"

"To the King of Württemberg," Marbœuf answered.

Napoleon frowned. "Ah, Jerome! Let the coquin wait." Jerome's debts and the criminal extravagance of the court at Cassel had compelled him to modify a secret clause in the Treaty.

At this moment both the folding-doors were flung wide.

"The Prince de Neuchâtel."

Two pages of the household, in gold and scarlet, appeared, and, between them, through the vertical oblong of darkness, Berthier in full uniform entered, scarcely less glittering and dazzling than the imperial chamberlains and pages.

His carriage and six fine horses waited below, and he had been stopped at the very door.

Napoleon considered him. A malicious smile broke over his face.

"We cannot part with you, mon prince. Where is your bâton?" he went on, taking him affectionately by the ear.

"What a comedy!" Montesquiou murmured to Bertrand as he took his seat beside him at a temporary desk made out of a low box in acacia-wood laid on the top of a gilt table. Montesquiou's audacity threw Bertrand into a panic; but to suppress Montesquiou was out of the question. He had all the levity and all the dare-devil courage of his caste. He was chivalrous, never refused to do a kindness that was in his power; and if he were in debt everywhere, he was also, whenever he had money, the most open-handed of men. To him certainly Napoleon's bitter sarcasm on the noblesse could not be extended—"I showed them the path to glory, but they would not tread it. I opened my drawing-room doors and they rushed through them in crowds."

III

"The mine under the Mölker bastion has not exploded. Why?" the Emperor said, addressing Berthier, as though that information, just semaphored by Daru, were the cause of his interrupting his Chief of the Staff's return to Vienna. But without waiting for a reply, he addressed to him a series of rapid questions upon the provisioning of the Eleventh Corps, Marmont's, which, three days later, was to replace the Imperial Guard in the capital.

"Tell me—the 31st foot, the 14th chasseurs, and the 19th—in what parts of Tuscany are they quartered—and the 6th hussars and the 4th Polish lancers? I must give Eugène at least twelve regiments of cavalry. I cannot have Lefebvre's blunder repeated. And a flying column must be sent into Istria. The English on hearing of the peace will at once attempt a descent."

Berthier gave the necessary answers. It was an amazing feat of memory; but Berthier was not the "heaven-born chief of the staff" for nothing.

"Good—good!" Napoleon said, still in the affectionate voice which all that day he had employed in talking to him. "And how many rounds of ammunition are there at Gratz?"

"Eight hundred and seventy-five thousand, but other two hundred thousand are on the way."

"Eight hundred thousand? Good God! There ought to be two millions. See to it at once. And when can Macdonald occupy the town?"

"In five days."

But this time Berthier's answer was too unhesitating. Napoleon's suspicious ears caught the accent of a premeditated or prearranged reply.

"In five days? Why not in three? Have I forgiven the past, recalled him from exile, afforded him an unparalleled opportunity of glory at Wagram and made him a marshal, to be repaid with ingratitude or sloth? Five days!"

A storm seemed imminent; but Napoleon turned with a gesture of impatience to Bertrand.

"Write! The two divisions of Marshal Macdonald shall be at Gratz in three days."

The order, as Berthier very well knew, could not possibly be executed. It affected him disturbingly; for it showed that not only in external and negligible affairs but in pressing and organic things Napoleon had divorced his mind from reality. Nevertheless, not a muscle of his face moved.

The unfortunate trick of folding his arms across his chest alone betrayed his discomposure.

Napoleon saw it; a slight nervous cough, habitual to him in moments of excitement, seized him. He spat angrily on the ground.

"And Drouet?" he exclaimed, addressing Berthier. "And the three Bavarian divisions? They must have their vengeance on the Tyrolese; they must themselves punish the rebels; they must themselves teach these swineherds that no one can with impunity revolt against *my* ally! I am ready to hear their grievances; but they must state them upon their knees. Let me hear not a syllable about their independence, or the continuance of Austria's rule! I will wage eternal war rather."

Again the nervous cough, caused by an irritation in the bronchial tubes, aggravated by his speech in the Danube mists that morning, seized Napoleon.

Berthier was about to take his leave, but the Emperor, instantly changing his tone, drew him aside and said in a low voice:

"You know my plans. Has Barraguay d'Hilliers an organizing head? Can you make use of him? I will retain the nominal command till I reach Passau; but you will leave the Alleegasse at once, and take up your residence at Schönbrunn. Here your power is absolute. But remember: there is no peace so long as we are in an enemy's country. Relax nothing. I desire each corps to enter, pass through, and leave Vienna every man with his finger on the trigger. The conditions are——"

He stated the details of the evacuation. By November 1st, Masséna with 40,000 and Davout with 60,000 were to evacuate Moravia, the latter concentrating upon Vienna, the former upon Krems. Oudinot with the Second Corps, 24,000 strong, was to be out of Vienna by the same date and concentrated upon Pölten and Mölk. Then followed a

second series of instructions, giving the position of each corps up to the 15th December, Berthier now and then interpolating a variant or a suggestion, every word, including Berthier's corrections, being meanwhile verified or corrected by Bertrand and Montesquiou.

With a tug at his ear and a friendly tap on the shoulder Berthier was dismissed.

IV

In Napoleon's presence, the individuality of other men was effaced. During that interview six men were taking down his commands or ideas or words as rapidly as he could utter them, but Ménéval seemed to speak and act like Berthier, Berthier like Fain, Fain like Marbœuf, and Marbœuf like Bertrand. Montesquiou alone retained a certain personality, the corrupt cynicism of his mind, the negligent disdain of his manners, making this Mephistopheles of the ante-chamber, even in his youth, one of the most outstanding representatives of the noblesse in Napoleon's entourage.

Ménéval, meanwhile, had been engaged on a dispatch to the Czar. Napoleon had aided him, now by a word, now by a phrase, jerked in amid his dialogue with Berthier. He now took the draft from Ménéval's hands, and, with a grimace, began to correct.

"What is this? It is incredible."

He tore the draft into shreds and trampled on them.

Ménéval waited, suave and imperturbable. Less downright than Rapp or Duroc, less sincere *au fond*, he yet retained in Napoleon's neighbourhood a measure of critical power which he had constantly to disguise.

"Write!"

The Emperor sketched the heads of the draft in the following saccadé phrases,—

"To the Czar write,—Who has been poisoning the mind

of Your Majesty? I will never protect a rebel. What! Tyrol in flames, insurrections in Spain, Prussia arming—does Alexander think me mad? Does he imagine that I will imitate the accursed House of Lorraine? Let Francis II. send gold chains to ci-devant emigrés or to insurgent peasants! If a single Polish rebel seeks refuge in my State I will have him instantly shot or sent in chains to Moscow. The only hope of Warsaw is in the favour of its sovereign, his Imperial Majesty the Czar. Let it look to him for redress. Repeat that I have given Austria most lenient terms. She cedes Salzburg and some trifles beyond the Inn. I have not taken an inch of Bavaria, and in Italy only the region indispensable for my communications with Dalmatia."

This, Ménéval thought ironically, Alexander I., who has never forgotten Suvarow's campaign and is still sore on account of Italy, is to accept as an accurate description of Austria's surrender of the Innviertel, Salzburg, the best portion of Friuli, Carniola, Trieste, and all Dalmatia and Croatia south of the Save—3,500,000 subjects and an indemnity of £3,400,000! And will Alexander accept the half million wretched peasants of Tarnopol as the equivalent of the 1,500,000 added to Warsaw?

But Napoleon tricked his partners in war as at cards. Shortsightedness was part of his "greatness."

"Say also," the Emperor began again, stamping his foot, "that I have been thus lenient out of consideration for his Imperial Majesty the Czar. Add that Madrid is safe, Wellington in full retreat, and that America is about to declare war on England."

He turned to Bertrand, Eugène's admirer and flatterer.

"To the Viceroy, Prince Eugène," he said, "write—'It is fitting that the victor of Raab shall be the subjugator of the Tyrol, and secure for himself the laurels that fell from the brow of Lefebvre.'"

He stopped abruptly. "Quoi donc? What is it now?"

Fain, at the table on his left, had raised his head. The letters to the secondary kings and princes announcing the peace were completed and awaited the Emperor's signature.

Without sitting down Napoleon took a quill, shook off the ink, then glanced keenly at the headings and at the "Monsieur mon frère"—to Frederick Augustus, the big, broad-faced, somnolent King of Saxony; to Maximilian Joseph, King of Bavaria, changing without rhyme or reason the first line of Fain's draft into "Je m'empresse d'annoncer" and handing it to the secretary to re-write, whilst he proceeded to sign the remaining letters—to Dalberg, prince primate of the Confederation of the Rhine, to the Grand-Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, to the Prince Borghese, husband of Pauline, now at Turin, to the Grand-Duke of Baden—making the singular flourish that now passed for his name, though only an eye accustomed to decipher Shabestari handwriting could transliterate more than the "N."

He returned then to Bertrand's letter to Eugène.

It had long been Napoleon's whim to make a soldier of his stepson, and he had decided to train him in the art of war himself. Eugène, though an amiable individual, was as unfit for the part assigned to him by his great step-father as were Joseph or Louis; but he was as incapable of treason as of ambition, and more conscious than the brothers of Napoleon's greatness, so conscious, indeed, that three months hence he, the son of Josephine, was to describe Napoleon's resolution to divorce her as "an honour to my mother."

"Write," he said to Bertrand, "write to the Viceroy—I charge you especially, first, with the submission of the Tyrol; secondly, with the duty of organizing the territories ceded to me by this treaty, henceforth to be described by the name of the Provinces of Illyria. You shall yourself remain

in Vienna until the exchange of ratifications. You shall review at once the Eleventh Corps, which is now under your command, and furnish it from the magazines at Vienna with everything that it requires. The sick and wounded of the Army of Italy and of the Eleventh Corps shall be removed to Gratz and to Löben."

Then followed instructions to Generals Rusca and Drouet in regard to the concentration upon Villach and upon Salzburg, Balsano and Brixen, terminating with a sketch of the plan of campaign.

These instructions, dictated alternately to Bertrand and Montesquiou, the former taking the Tyrol, the latter the newly acquired territories, amounted, even in their condensed form, to 2,500 words, packed with geographical details, directing the movements and numbers, the length of the marches, the positions of brigades, regiments, divisions, extending over a vast region whose government, fortresses, its finance and laws, its river, mountains, cities, and plains, were not less clear to Napoleon's mind, unaided that afternoon by any map, than the inlaid pattern of the costly table at which Bertrand sat writing.

V

The torrent of geographical names and military details ceased; and, in the silence broken only by the scratching of the quills, observing that Ménéval's pen was idle, and that, with his bald head and wide perspiring face uplifted, he was waiting for a command, Napoleon, interpreting the look before Ménéval had spoken a word, exclaimed:

"Ah, that absurd business!"

He sat down and, putting his fingers together, laughed shrilly, jocosely, cunningly.

"What blockheads your men of letters are! Indeed it is one thing to lead for a single week an army corps of thirty

thousand men and another to translate like Delille an epic in twelve books, or write a history in thirty volumes like Lacretelle! This proposal for a monument to me—how fatuous in itself! No man should permit a monument to be erected to himself in his lifetime. At most he may allow his own generation to choose the site; the generation after him may raise the pedestal; it is the third generation only that should dare erect the statue. Yet what can I do? I have been drawn headlong by the follies of this age. Good God! These men of letters! If the secret of stupidity were lost to the world I could find enough in the Institute to repeople a planet!"

He broke into another strident laugh.

"They intend nothing but honour to your Majesty," Ménéval said, deprecatingly. "This monument has long been in their minds. It was intended as a surprise upon your return to Paris. This unfortunate dispute about the names has frustrated that intention."

"Bah," Napoleon said, flinging himself back, "phrases! phrases!"

Ménéval was alluding to a letter received from Paris three days previously, but left for consideration till this afternoon, requesting Napoleon to decide whether he would be styled "Augustus" upon both piers of the triumphal arch, or "Augustus" upon the one and "Germanicus" upon the other, or, again, "Augustus" on both piers and "Germanicus" on the entablature above the key-stone, so that, beginning from the top, it would read, "Napoleon, Germanicus, Augustus, Augustus."

"But this earth is a children's nursery," Napoleon went on in reflective tones, "and grown men like myself must play with the toys in use there or leave it—or leave it! But these messieurs of the Institute! Daily they move me to anger or to laughter. A year ago I had to reprehend one for comparing me to God, another for asserting that the

universe was hushed in my presence. The universe! If I frown, will a fly cease its buzzing, or a cricket its song? These phrase-makers! To what depths of imbecility or vileness will not the human mind descend!"

The cloud dissipated instantly, and he resumed:

"What do they intend by this request? Fontanes—that pompous school-usher, fit only to be a laureate in prose to the Princess Bacciocchi—does he think to overwhelm *me* with his empty words? Augustus? Germanicus? What are these names—ces noms-la—to inscribe on my triumphal arch? Augustus won an indifferent sea-fight at Actium, but for the rest of his life his sword was sheathed. When Varus lost the six legions, did Augustus hasten from Rome to avenge the insult? Not a bit of it. He wandered up and down his palace wringing his hands and wailing—'Varus, give me back my legions; give me back my legions; Varus!' Is that the part for a hero or even for a brave man to play? And is that a name to inscribe on *my* monument? As for Germanicus, he owes his fame to his widow, his funeral urn, and the venomous eulogies of Tacitus."

He looked at Ménéval as though expecting or tempting him to argue. Ménéval knew better.

"Sire," he said with extreme deference, "does not M. Fontanes mean merely to express by Germanicus, 'the conqueror of Germany,' not the individual Roman?"

"Very well. But why not say so in good French? Why use Latin? The Romans when they raised statues to Cæsar did not inscribe his victories in Greek! France is a greater empire than Rome, and possesses a greater language. Why should it not use its own tongue? I desire French to become the language of a reconstituted Europe, a re-united Europe. I am resolved that Europe shall be one and indivisible; that in the future a man shall say 'I am a citizen of Europe,' as now he says 'of France,' 'of Saxony,' 'of Austria.' Language is the very principle of

division. Language sows division amongst men; it fosters that effête absurdity 'the nation' and national spirit. What barbarous alphabets and literatures are the German and the Russian! They are fit only for a Museum of Antiquities. But to the religion and culture, to the arts and civilization of the new era I intend to give one language—French. Therefore to inscribe my name in Latin is at once to insult the majesty of the French tongue and to thwart my ultimate designs. Is it not so? Is it not so? No, but answer, Ménéval, answer!"

Ménéval had no answer.

Napoleon went on:

"But the pedant is the pedant still; the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. He is perpetually on the hunt for comparisons. He cannot see a thing until he has found something like it in a book. History is the instructor of mankind; it is the only philosophy; but History never repeats itself. Because I fought the English in Spain in 1808, why must I be perpetually reminded that Louis XIV.'s generals fought in Spain in 1708? What resemblance is there between my wars and his? My wars are wars for a new Europe, his were wars for an old dynasty. I came to Spain to put an end to feudal and to priestly tyranny; Louis XIV., to fasten on the neck of Spain the yoke of Jesuitism and feudal oppression. Pedantry! Pedantry! Why must Canova make me stand naked to posterity's gaze as if I were a Greek boxer? I would destroy every copy of that statue if I could. France and I should be examples to the future, not imitators of the past. Write as I bid you—no Latin, no Germanicus, no Augustus; but simply my name—and in French."

Ménéval jotted down a hurried note.

Napoleon turned sharply to Bertrand,—"Demand once more of Daru whether cloth breeches have been supplied to the Second Corps and to the two regiments which a week

ago sent in their petition. This is not weather for cotton. Does he confound the Danube with the Bay of Naples? And request Admiral Decres to execute at once my orders of the 12th. Do you understand?" he said to Marbœuf. "To *do* them without any more of his 'buts' or 'fors' or 'ifs.'"

A smile flickered in Montesquiou's eyes. He disliked the ruddy, loud-voiced sailor, whose prolixity during the recent Walcheren episode had caused frequent explosions in the cabinet at Schönbrunn.

Excitement and anger, some secret impatience, had replaced the silky, humorous, bantering tone in which the Emperor had spoken to Ménéval.

A storm against the Swiss followed the angry tirade against Daru's remissness and Decres' prolixity. Napoleon was becoming more and more irritated by Savary's continued absence.

"The Helvetian Republic grumbles because it has to supply me with a miserable 18,000 men, yet England has two Swiss regiments in her pay. Write to these deputies that there shall be no abatement, not a single conscript, no, not a cartridge! And what does Clarke mean?" he said to the same secretary, Fain, for by this time Fain had acquired something of Ménéval's dexterity in seizing the Emperor's phrases on their flight.

He thrust a volume of the Code before Fain's eyes.

"I see there," he said, pointing with a trembling, short but finely manicured finger to a particular clause, heavily pencilled on the margin, "I see there a law which ordains that any man who receives a deserter or a flag of truce after sunset shall be shot. Good God! Are we still under the Terror? Is the Committee of Public Safety still sitting? Command Clarke to prepare at once 'A Guide for Military Tribunals' permitting the abrogation of this infamous law."

There was a lull of a few seconds.

Napoleon glanced at the time-piece. Nine minutes past five. Why had Savary not arrived? Had there been some hitch? Some fresh discovery?

He was about to dictate a sentence to Ménéval, but a subconscious process of his mind having worked to its issue he stopped Fain, and dictated a rapid order in addition to the three with which Fain was already struggling.

"Write also to Aldini at Milan to have a brochure written —but not more than fifty pages long. I do not wish a treatise that will not be finished before Judgment Day, but a short, pungent article, seasoned with Italian anecdotes, proving that the Papacy is and always has been the enemy of Italian unity. Request him to take as his motto Machiavelli's maxim, 'The Papacy is the stone thrust into the side of Italy to keep the wound open.' Make him paint Julius II. and the League of Cambray hurling France and Austria against Venice."

Ménéval had now completed the letter to the Institute.

Napoleon glanced along the pages, and, without a comment, stooped forward abruptly and scratched his signature. The vicious flourish at the end betrayed something of the writer's mood.

Ménéval was preparing to continue the interrupted letter to Francis II. As yet only the concluding sentence satisfied Napoleon entirely,—"Voici donc la quatrième guerre entre Votre Majesté et moi terminée."

But at that moment the double door was again flung open. A page appeared.

"The duc de Rovigo begs an audience of your Majesty."

"Where is he?"

"In the audience chamber, your Majesty."

"Bring him here."

He passed swiftly into the adjoining cabinet, which, during Napoleon's residence at Schönbrunn, corresponded to the

Bureau d'Archives at Trianon or St. Cloud. Two gardes de portefeuilles were on duty as pages.

VI

"Eh bien?" Napoleon said impatiently, stopping right in front of Savary and scrutinizing his sallow countenance, the long drooping nose accentuated by the stooping position. "One sees nothing of you, monsieur le duc. You have been at work all day? What have you discovered?"

"Nothing, Sire."

"Nothing? Not in Vienna? Not at Nussdorf?"

Savary explained the delay, beginning with the report of his agent early in the morning, ending with his visit to the inn and the villages on the other side of the river.

Napoleon did not listen.

"Have my instructions been carried out? Has the prisoner fasted?"

The conqueror's anxiety astounded Savary. During the day, amid all the variety of his occupations, the singular idea had fixed itself in Bonaparte's mind that if he could not break this boy's will he could not break the will of Germany. He might make treaties with every cabinet from the Rhine to the Oder, and from the Baltic to the Tyrol; but unless Germany itself were conquered his battles might as well never have been fought.

"Has Duroc conversed with him as I commanded?"

"We did everything, your Majesty, everything," and he added, for he was fatigued and exasperated by the long day's task,—"The duc de Friuli will himself narrate to you. I outrode him."

Napoleon said nothing.

Savary, disturbed by this silence, went on in a hurried apologetic manner:

"General Hulin informed the prisoner that your Majesty

aimed at the regeneration of Europe and of Germany; he reminded him that the greatest of the German princes, nobles, and poets were on your side; that M. Goethe and M. Wieland had accepted the Legion of Honour from your hands——"

"Well, well," Napoleon said impatiently. "What did he answer?"

"He answered that if this were true they were traitors; that if Schiller had lived he would never have acted thus, and in a formidable voice he repeated, 'They are traitors. Their genius only makes their treason the more atrocious. If I stood alone in all Germany I would still affirm this. They are traitors. I have failed in my attempt; now I have no wish but to die.'"

At these words, Napoleon walked abruptly to a window and with folded arms stood looking out across the gardens. This room, in a projecting façade of the left wing, looked nearly due west. The sun was setting. The blackening woods of the Wienerwald stretched beneath it like a bar of ebony.

"How small that red and sinking orb appears! How small: and so are the mightiest affairs of men."

Bonaparte from his twenty-fifth year had been accustomed to signing the death-warrants of men; he had signed many political executions and in war military executions by the score. Violence had succeeded with him. After the extermination of the Jacobins, Marengo; after the murder of d'Enghien, the sun of Austerlitz; and after the murder of Palm, the victories of Jena, Eylau, and Friedland.

"But now?"

Again, spectre-like, he saw the two figures of his dream standing hand in hand before him, there in the falling twilight. He stared at them fixedly, and sensibly before his very gaze they dissolved.

But the other? The reality?

He saw that other still, but in a changing shape—the slender figure outstretched on a plank or on the straw of a dungeon watching, haggard-eyed, this same light sinking into night, this sun going down that for him would not rise again, or rise only to set and set eternally.

Savary's voice put a term to his thoughts.

"General Lanier is charged with the execution of the sentence."

"What sentence?"

He did not wait for the answer, but walking up and down stopped again by the window.

"That need not be done to-night. To-morrow or——"

"The sooner he disappears, your Majesty," Savary said with sudden energy, "the sooner the danger is over. We should not give the Tugendbund a martyr. If he disappears to-night or to-morrow not a trace of his crime or his history will pass the arsenal walls.

"His relations still live," Napoleon said brusquely. "He has a father."

"His father need know nothing, your Majesty. I have provided for that."

"What do you mean?"

Savary unfolded his story of the nobleman in search of a courier. He would himself write to the pastor at Naumburg, informing him that his son had accepted this position; and from time to time he would remit, as from Staps himself, modest sums of money such as thrifty young men in Germany, during their Wanderjahre, sent to their homes.

"You mean that his father is to be made to believe that his son is still alive, and well and prospering?"

"His father, his relations, and all other Germans, that is, the few who know of his existence."

Savary went into his plan more fully, Napoleon now and then criticizing it, and rectifying a fact or a detail. Then

with his habitual grimace—a twitch of the left corner of the mouth which gave it the expression of a sneer, he said sententiously:

"It is boldly planned."

He himself found a kind of pleasure in such duplicity. It appealed to the Corsican in him.

"Where is the dossier? It ought not to have been left at the arsenal."

"The dossier is here, Sire. I have not forgotten the blunder made by the Convention."

Napoleon's surprised but satisfied look was his reward.

Savary alluded to the unpleasant effect upon public opinion produced by the dossier of the trial of Marie Antoinette, recently exhumed from the archives of the Palais de Justice.

"It is enough," Napoleon said again. "To-morrow morning—before reveille. Let me know how he dies."

With this command the interview ended.

The room was now dark. Napoleon stood for some seconds alone in the greyness. He then returned to his secretaries. The letter to the Emperor Francis was not yet dictated. It must be dispatched to-night.

CHAPTER XIII

AN IDYLL AT MÖDLING

I

AT ten o'clock on the Saturday morning of the Treaty the curtains of the Countess Esterthal's bedroom were still closed.

Her sleep had been short, but it had been deep. She had drunk her morning cup of coffee, and now lay amongst her pillows with her arms behind her head, lazily watching her maid.

The latter in her black dress and white apron with a red border, with a cap like a crimson butterfly perched amid her stubborn black-brown hair, was moving about the room with short, quick, excited steps.

"Had padrino come down?" Amalie asked.

"His Excellency went out early; he returned an hour ago."

"Any visitors?"

"Oh, yes; a thousand. They are already with His Excellency in the library—Count Alvintsky, Field-Marshal Beaulieu, Marshal Siegenthal——"

"That is enough, Tita."

Amalie knit her brows and turning on her side lay looking at the intense light between the curtains. She loved those brooding morning silences when the sunlight mirrored itself on the furniture of the room, on polished wood or porcelain

or gold or silver. In those long and leisured hours she had time to remember and time to reflect, time to read or to meditate. During the campaign she had read morning by morning some pages of Rentzdorf's books. For those books had gradually become to her everything that at Monza her missal and her breviary had been.

At a sudden *brouhaha* of voices she started.

A door had opened, and from this room on the ground-floor came the noise of anger or excitement.

"Oh," Tita exclaimed, coming to a stop in opening a drawer, "I do hope they will not upset the peace. Marshal Beaulieu looked so ferocious."

"Do not be alarmed, Tita. He has been looking 'ferocious' these seventy years. They are simply fighting the old battles over again."

The door closed and the sound ceased.

Tita resumed her task, and her mistress, with a pure sense of joy born of the release from the anxieties of the past months, sprang out of bed and, her arms high above her head, stood for a second rejoicing in her vital strength and youth and radiant health, by a few hours' sleep restored.

"O earth, O mother earth!" she hummed to herself. "Hast thou wheeled again into the flooding, wonder-working light o' the sun?"

The words occurred in Rentzdorf's *Caius Marius*, but they always made her laugh. The passage in which they occurred had moved her deeply; but now Rentzdorf had forbidden her to admire them or repeat them or remember them at all. Quoting them alone, she recaptured at once her early emotion and a sense of joyous, teasing independence.

"And now I will dress."

She usually had Tita out of the room during this rite; but this morning the very spirit of mischief possessed her. Tita, crouching in front of the lowest drawer of an antique

cabinet in white and gold, had at this moment her back turned to her. The crimson butterfly in her hair, Amalie calculated, looked settled for at least twenty seconds.

For two seconds she deliberated; the next, her night-dress had slipped to the floor, falling in snowy folds about her feet, and she stood erect in dazzling nakedness, surveying with her lover's eyes the image of her own gleaming body as it sprang up, like alabaster upon sapphire, against the azure background of the hangings of her bed reflected in the oval mirror in front. So she stood. But at a premonitory quiver in the crimson butterfly she leaned quickly sideways, and after a struggle about her shoulders she stood veiled to the knees in the white films of her chemise.

When Tita rose from her stooping position she saw her mistress, enveloped in a quilted dressing-gown, seated quietly in front of the ormolu table and its oval mirror.

"Tita."

"Yes, madame?"

But Amalie had forgotten why she had called her and said abstractedly:

"You have not your headache this morning?"

"Oh, no, madame; I could not have a headache to-day."

"I will have my hair done at once."

It was a caress of a sort to feel her maid's cool fine fingers linger in her hair or dart hither and thither amongst its golden warmth, now spreading it over her shoulders in innumerable shining ripples, now twisting it into coils, now into delicate braids. Once, with a swift ambiguous glance, Tita looked boldly into her mistress's blue eyes reflected in the mirror, and by a kind of feminine contagion forced her to laugh, without knowing why. . . .

II

Amalie had dismissed Tita, and was lying on a sofa by the window.

The bell of St. Stephen's was tolling for a special service. There was a sacred stillness in the sky, in the faint haze still clinging about the trees, in the russet glow of the late flowering plants. A liquid amber glory pulsated in the upper air. It quivered through the still leaves of the sycamores, and in mellow golden radiance came to rest on the dark soft green of the moss below.

She had an hour thus to be alone.

At such intervals life was prayer; earth itself a temple of which the priest was God.

Taking up the second part of the *Prometheus* she passed rapidly to the scene which contains the great pæon and death song of the Spirit of the Worlds, reading it slowly, taking in each cadence, each syllable.

"Behold, the coursers of the evening, how they gather above the sunset, squadron behind squadron arrayed in their glory! What splendour! What brightness! Their forms outnumber the forest in multitude, and their hues the mine—crimson and emerald, amethyst and gold. But the sun goeth down, and their glory is withered. So shall I sink—so shall I, the everlasting God, sink and go down: and the cloud-pavilions, my worlds, shall be dispersed and vanish away. But I know whither I go, voyaging beyond Being to my timeless rest."

The strange, the frenzying joy—to be God! To hear in her own cry or her lover's, God's cry; to stay to listen, and with her soul hovering on her lips in the very flight towards ecstasy, to feel in her pulsing, eddying blood God's blood; in her frightful grief God's grief, His torment, His anguish! This Rentzdorf had given her.

III

An hour later, when Amalie descended the broad, sun-steeped staircase, she found "Old Austria" in force in the hall and in the breakfast-room.

A little pot-bellied man in a general's uniform, with one of the most rakish old faces in Vienna, at once made for her direction. His right eye squinting outwards gave to the whole physiognomy something alert and humorous.

"Ah, M. de Beaulieu . . ." the Countess said amicably.

It was indeed Beaulieu, famous as the first Austrian commander that Napoleon had thoroughly smashed. He had arrived the night before from Linz, where amid flower gardens and picture galleries he had been living in a not inglorious retirement.

"Your Illustriousness in Vienna?" he answered, his false teeth ghastly new in his battered, yellow, shrivelled-up countenance. "Then Austria has lost no provinces."

Beaulieu, in speaking to a beautiful woman, still delighted in the inane gallantries fashionable in the days of Maria Theresa, and if rumours were true, he was a dog that had had his day amongst the women of that Court.

"What mischief is afoot now?" he demanded, fixing her with his squint eye. "Eh-h?"

"Why, what mischief?" Amalie said demurely. "I have been eating my breakfast."

"Gr-r-r . . . Breakfast! Where there is beauty there is devilry, even at breakfast-time. You were at the Burg last night? A pretty thing that for Vienna! Gr-r-r . . ."

Amalie moved away towards a group of functionaries and retired officers standing round Count Esterthal. They had assembled that morning, these veterans, ostensibly to consider Vienna and the Empire and the new situation; but after a quarter of an hour they were bored by patriotism; for their patriotism was the exposition of his own plans by each in turn—his plans for Austria's future, his theories of her past defeats, his counsels to the men who could save her, his censure of the men who had caused her humiliation. And with unaffected interest they began to discuss not the nation's but their own ailments, and their own cures for old

age, gout, ague, corpulency, deafness, the dropsy. Then first one, then another, had begun to denounce the French—their robberies, their insolence, their exactions, the obstacles imposed by the occupation upon personal comforts or personal amusements—hunting, driving, riding, shooting; one narrating a fabulous story of the price he had paid for a dozen of wine; another, his desperate straits to make up a pack of boar-hounds.

Johann, till then unobserved in the background, now came up to Amalie.

"Why is Rentzdorf not here?"

"I will tell you; but come here," she said quickly.

At a remark of Alvintsky's, Johann's dark face had flushed. A disagreeable smile like a sneer was on his lips.

"Come this way," she insisted in a whisper, adding in a louder voice, "Tell me—how do you like the Treaty?"

Two other visitors, with marks of great deference, had approached Alvintsky, Beaulieu, and Count Esterthal.

"More spectres from the Seven Years' War," Johann said, eyeing the new-comers. "Great God, where do they all come from? In Austria no man under seventy should be a colonel, no man a general under eighty, and as for our field-marshals, they should at least be in their ninety-fifth year. Youth has ruined us! Why, Beaulieu is only eighty-four, and Alvintsky not yet seventy-five! Austria! Thy name is Antiquity—old institutions, old customs, old families, old forts, old guns, old everything—and above all, old generals!"

"We can beat him yet," Beaulieu was screaming in a shrill and joyous voice. "It is merely the ups and downs of war."

"Oh God, those unconquerable heroes!" Count Johann continued. "Those blustering, blundering, bluttering fools! Old Wurmser died of a broken heart and Bruns-

wick of his wounds; but Beaulieu and Alvintsky! These many-wintered crows will roost on all our sepulchres."

Through the open window came the sound of male voices chanting in unison, "In exitu Egypt. . . ."

It was a procession of grey friars on their way to the inner city.

"Your sister is still at Mödling?" Amalie enquired.

"Wilhelmina? Yes," he said, "unless she considers that this crisis in Austria's history demands her presence in the capital! Why do you ask?"

Wilhelmina was a kind of female Count Markowitz, but good-natured.

Amalie's plan was that Toc, Johann, Rentzdorf, and herself should ride to Mödling, pass the afternoon there, and ride back again in the twilight in time for the Opera.

He listened moodily.

There behind Amalie, there in imagination stood his impetuous, wilful, entirely beloved mistress in palpitating life, ready to throw her arms about him. "Austria is lost," she seemed to say, "the precious dynasty discredited, but canst thou know misery beholding me?"

"You will come?"

"Rentzdorf has an engagement with Ludwig Beethoven this evening," he said demurringly.

"Rentzdorf has an engagement with Amalie von Esterthal this morning and this afternoon and all afternoons; and you, you similarly with Princess Dürrenstein. It is decided? I will answer for Heinrich," she went on, smiling at his obstinacy. "Go and get Toc."

"I will go and get passports."

"Is that necessary?"

"It is safer."

She went to the stables; visited Rothgar, her favourite mount, saved from the requisition by Andréossy's kindness. It was a fine bay which Toc had described as so much

"a gentleman" that even if he stumbled or jibbed it did not hurt the rider, for whatever Rothgar did had its harmoniousness.

IV

In man's life the first joy is often scarcely experienced when disquiet begins, born of that brooding joy itself.

Shortly after noon Amalie retired to her room in an access of troubled and despondent irritability. Her riding-habit lay ready, but she was in no mood to put it on.

In the hall a messenger had handed her a letter from her husband. Though not at the Rittersaal, he had passed the night in Vienna. He was now with the Archduke Maximilian at the Prince de Ligne's, not five miles away.

"All will begin again," she said to herself bitterly, "all *has* begun again. That too the Peace has brought me."

Her thoughts went to Rentzdorf and the scene in the supper-room last night. Would that quarrel—if quarrel it were—affect these recommencements? Would he tolerate her continuing to share this house with Ferdinand? And she herself—ought she to permit him to tolerate it?

"For that," she reasoned bitterly, "is the true question. Ought I to, or can I, go on witnessing or imaging his misery night by night?" Her imagination winged by the quarrel set the answer before her in a vivid and terrible enough shape. She beheld her lover stretched in his tent on the night before a battle and saw the steady, fierce melancholy in his eyes, the curve of the lips; and on his set features she saw descend the same grey despair as had overshadowed them last night.

Neither Rentzdorf nor herself was made for this life of covenanted deceit. Yet how was it to be remedied? The falsehood in her position in Vienna as Ferdinand von Esterthal's wife could only be exchanged for the falsehood

of her position as Rentzdorf's mistress in other towns or other cities.

She began to walk up and down her room, pondering the situation—her friends, her brothers' rank in the army; padrino, his age, his dependence on her presence for happiness; the burden which she would impose upon her lover; his genius, her own desperate incapacity, her weakness, his strength.

That very morning, in society's lies, insults, calumnies, and inneundoes against Napoleon, she had heard its insults upon herself and upon her lover if she once took the step to which every craving and every behest of reason urged her—flight together. And would it matter so much? she asked feverously. Was she a woman of that sort? Was she so bound to society? Uprooted from Vienna, would she indeed wither away?

In that society itself Toc's betrothal to Johann, left uncertain yesterday afternoon, but, as a swift note had informed her, finally ratified at Toc's house less than an hour ago, would render things all the more difficult, impelling her to flight. For the question started up in Amalie's mind: How would marriage affect Toc? Would she fall back into the dominion of the Markowitz code? Johann's own character, Rentzdorf had once said laughingly, was tempered by the irregularity of his relations with the Princess Dürrenstein. But now? Amalie saw herself and Rentzdorf excluded from Toc's circle.

"Praying for me!"

Her laughter was not pleasant.

The reaction was swift.

Distinctly she saw that the desire which to-day and all her days ravaged her blood was *not* the desire to be with Rentzdorf, sharing with him the same rooms, unseparated day and night; distinctly too she saw that the fear which had harrowed her was not the fear of the insecurity or anomaly

of her position; nor was it the recoil from the outstretched finger—"See! It is the Countess Esterthal who ran away with a poet!" Her fear was an unconquerable misgiving, derived from the tenacity with which she had adopted the maxim that the deepest, most sacred passion is not proof against the restraint, the bondage, the hourly, daily jarrings of sick nerves, weariness, all the incidents of common life.

Yes, she reasoned dully—each day, out of a world of men and women, to choose and be chosen—that in secret was her ideal.

"If this is so, what then is love?"

A modern instance occurred to her. The English ambassador, Lord Paget, had in January last married the English lady in whose divorce he was the co-respondent.

"And already he leaves her for Adelheid Ortski! And I? Of what is it that I am afraid? At bottom it is not of society's condemnation. It is the fear of this passion ending, in him or in me."

But Amalie had scarcely formulated this theorem when by the flare as of lightnings she saw that the wrong in her own and Rentzdorf's passion, the wrong in her own and Rentzdorf's life, and in all life and in all passion, was a wrong *which never could have been right;* that their passion was dyed in Being's essence; that, like everything which is beautiful or heroic, it was beautiful or heroic not because of its rightness or its wrongness, but because it was most deeply dyed in that strife and that anguish which is Being itself and God.

"And yet, if it could be like this, or like last night for ever! Then to sink in one grave and in eternity know but this again! But for us that can never be, never!"

Her hand pressed her brow bewilderedly, then back she sank shuddering, biting her handkerchief to suffocate her cries.

v

But at another onset of violent weeping she rose impatiently, bathing her eyes.

"What is the matter with me? Something eternally lost weeps in me."

She moistened her lips with water; her hand shook, spilling the water as she set down the glass.

Her mind in those minutes of conflict and insight had made the circuit of existence.

"It is the woman that I am plotting against, the woman that I ought to be; the God that is, against the God that shall be."

A bird's song, liquidly clear, free from all sorrow, a music into which sorrow not only had never come, but never could come, rose in the sycamore outside her window. Breathless, she stood listening. Tears dimmed her sight. Why had not nature rested there? The God who is nature, why had He gone on to create in man, and in woman above all, these intricate avenues to misery—the brain, the heart, the womb?

"Nature's innocence . . ."

She was no longer the dupe of that shibboleth. There was no innocence in nature.

"Adultery?"

This was not adultery. She knew adulterous women in Vienna; Madame Z.; Countess X., changing her lovers every five weeks or every five days. Her husband's liaison with Adelheid Ortski had been adultery.

"But this?"

She could front the God of any of the religions, unabashed.

"But my own God? The God of my religion—the world-soul?" she flashed out suddenly.

She pondered.

"That art thou, the world-soul." She saw rather than

heard her own bloodless lips, carved in bronze, whisper those words; but still she pondered.

"The ethics of all the religions are ultimately the same," Rentzdorf had asserted in one of his Dialogues; and in *The Runes of Odin* he had in his own person obviously spoken the mandate: "Look thou upon thine enemy's face until thou seest shine through it the face of God." Again, in *Caius Marius* she had once marked and studied the words of a Roman tribune to Sulla, "Accursed is he who builds his own joy upon another's suffering."

Her mind swept to affirmation.

"Nature's innocence? The bird's pure notes? If this in me is wrong, God in me is the wrong-doer; if this in me is sin, it is God in me that sins."

And a resolve, born out of all yesterday's and this morning's soul-conflict, rose in her mind like a distant light. In Naples long ago she had broken from the routine of her soul-life. Why then should she hesitate to break from the routine of her society-life? Once all her thinking had been thought out for her in Galilee or inside a priest's skull; yet she had shattered that deadly charm. Now all her actions were shaped for her in Vienna inside her acquaintances' skulls. Why did she hesitate?

"Heinrich, O my beloved, forgive me! Why do I doubt? Tear out the world's heart! Bleed to death of the wound or live for ever restored! This, that the world dreads, this is God."

But the future? Her equivocal position?

She turned in a paroxysm against herself, indignant. Could she imagine herself ever wearying of this—this unending ecstasy of soul and sense; touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight, transfigured all to soul-states, God-possessed unceasingly—could she imagine herself ever wearying of this in a crowd or in a desert, in obloquy or on a throne, of his voice, his passionate adoration of herself, his words, his visionary

thought, his laughter, his gloom? And in an exaltation she sped on—his vices, if they were vices, were diviner than the tabled virtues of others; his treachery better than another's faith.

"Together in the black rain—but together."

But in him—if this love should die? Oh, she reflected, let him have his uttermost will of her! In that tempest it were heaven's heaven to founder! She would tell him this on the ride; she would take back her refusals of last night. Why was she here except through him to know suffering?

"Give me the worst now, that I may better know the best. This afternoon . . ."

Her life rose before her; her life chequered with error on error—errors of judgment, errors of the heart, errors of will, of speech, of resolve.

"Woven of blunders," she muttered, "but this is not a blunder. This day I shall have done the one supremely right thing."

She called her maid.

"*Vite! Vite!* Quick, quick!"

VI

The environs of Vienna, notably to the south and south-west, are the most beautiful possessed by any capital in Europe. The soil is sandy and broken, streams are frequent, valleys alternate with sudden bold headlands crested by a modern mansion or the ruins of a feudal tower, and over wide areas the ground is strewn with boulders of rock or green with sudden patches of gorse and bracken. Pines cluster into gloom on the lower slopes, or clamber one behind the other up some narrow ledge rising sheer above the bed of a vanished torrent, like Druid priests in their dark-robed processions of pre-Roman times.

To the east the horizon line is level with the Danube;

northward through the evening haze the city's roofs, spires, domes, gables, glimmer unsubstantial as a resting cloud. Vienna's oriental aspect is then very marked. Rentzdorf often came here in summer, and as he lay and looked northward to the city would see, under that smoke canopy, now a rearguard left by the crusades, now a camp flung far forward in the counter-attack by Islam against the retreating Cross.

Near Mödling, late that Saturday afternoon, he and the Countess Amalie were sitting amongst the bracken on the edge of a pine-coppice overlooking the valley.

"You have to meet Uvarow at nine?"

"Yes"; he answered, "at nine, to take him to Beethoven."

In the silence a pine-cone dropped and she watched the silvery intense light between the stems on the further edge of the wood.

"Have you seen much of him recently?" Rentzdorf asked.

"Beethoven? No. He has moved his lodging again, Count Markowitz tells me."

And she thought of Wilhelmina Markowitz's sharp criticism of the composer that afternoon for having taken no active part whatever in the war. "How are we to listen when next he conducts his *Eroica*," Wilhelmina had concluded, "when we reflect that with heroes in battle not four miles away, he stayed quiet at home?"

Guessing her thoughts, Rentzdorf looked at Amalie. She was wearing a felt hat with a feather which swept in a long curve and fell below the brim, and as, leaning on her elbow, she lay on the turf, fragrant with pine-needles, her right foot was thrust forward a little under the hem of her riding-skirt.

But Amalie did not continue the subject. The words which she had that morning determined to speak were still unspoken. She wished to speak them now. The after-

noon was wearing to evening; but even now she was unwilling to mar the tranced hours of this celestial day.

She turned restlessly, changing her position.

"How hot the sun still is! What is it that makes a man a Bonaparte, Heinrich? I have been watching that green fly by the spider's web, there, between those two pines, these last ten minutes. He must be a cunning, last summer's fly, doing it to torment the spider. This evening is lost to us. Why does M. Uvarow wish to see Beethoven?"

"He has heard of his new symphony. He has been of service to Bolli and returns to Troppau and thence to Petersburg to-morrow."

She began to play with the fingers of his hand resting on the turf near her. The rings on her own sparkled in the sun. "If those fingers of yours were the meshes of a spider's web these iridescent flies on mine would soon be caught!" she said. And she imprisoned his hand under both her own against her knee.

A sudden hush and quietude had caught the world, a stillness within a stillness. Far below she heard the faint murmur of a brook unheard till now. Everywhere were the golden browns of autumn; the very air, motionless as a translucent lake above the valley, was pervaded by the melancholy russet gleams.

And the peace of exterior nature and the autumn day—the woods, the resting clouds, the mist-suffused hills, the shadow of the pine-stem, the pattern worked by the bracken fronds on the red sand, the sunlight asleep at the foot of the hills, the far-off dreaming spires and domes—passing into her heart, became the peace of the world-soul dreaming of Azbar; and the beauty of nature, passing into her soul, was projected upon the infinite future and became the world-soul's ecstasy, in its end attained, a pæan triumphant, a transport that strove to her lips in words and was still repressed.

In a silent but quivering mighty assertion of the faith that was his faith she murmured half to herself, turning to the immense steep curve of the eastern sky, blue from the zenith to the horizon line:

"God can never exhaust the wonder of His own being, nor of those worlds, not this nor mine. For if this that I feel is not God, there is for me no God. I could weep with the bliss of it; weep with the pain of it."

VII

Enervated yet exalted, she turned to her lover.

"Let us walk up the ravine, shall we?"

She stood up. He aided her to pick the pine-needles from her dress, pressing his lips to the outline of her knees.

They began their walk. Sometimes it led along a wooded path chequered with sunshine, sometimes in the open they skirted a sunburnt slope strewn with acorns. Far down on their right through tangled bushes the dark glimmer of the stream followed them.

Suddenly an arch of boughs, so thick and dark that it might have been the roof of a natural temple, rose above them. With a strained laugh she took his hand and said in a half-choked voice:

"I have something to say to you—something I have tried to say all day."

But the roof disparted and they came out on a platform overlooking a most wide landscape—north-westward, on their left, the dark outlines of the Wienerwald; nearer them, in the plains the ruins of a castle; and barring the horizon northward, the shimmering towers and domes of Vienna under their soft canopy of smoke.

She sat down on a boulder. Rentzdorf stretched himself on the turf, watching her hand as it tugged at some stalks of heather—the exquisite modelling of each finger, the tint and setting of the nail.

Suddenly he saw that she was trembling convulsively.

"Dearest, dearest, what is it?" He sprang to his feet. "Great God, you are weeping?"

She made a vague gesture.

"Ah," he said, "I know."

"Yes," she answered. "It is that again."

"When did you hear?"

"This morning—as I was about to ride to your lodging."

There was a silence.

"Well? And when does he come back?"

"It may be to-day."

She was resolute to spare neither him nor herself, hating all subterfuge.

A long, to her a terrible, pause ensued.

"It is soon," he muttered; but with a poignant sense of her misery he interrupted the sarcasm. "It does not matter, Amalie; it is simply nothing. Indeed, I have known this all day. It is nothing."

An immense happiness swept over her like a sea. He loved her. His love—earth, heaven, God, the past, all were in that.

"Heinrich . . ."

Her emotion left a rigid pallor, ageing her features, touching their beauty with an unendurable pathos—the premonitions of decay.

"There is a way to end it."

"To end it?"

"It is this which I really wished to say to you."

To his amazement and to her own a burst of distractingly sweet laughter followed the words, sweet as well-tuned bells or the plash of the stream far below, hung with beds of violets.

How is a woman unembarrassedly to offer herself to a man who may not want her? That was the idea at which she laughed.

"You asked me last night," she began; but breaking the construction of her sentence,—"I mean," she stammered, "I do not care whether I ride back again with Toc and Johann, or whether I ever enter Vienna again." And like snow that lies in glistening inertness, apparently frozen into motionlessness for ever, but at the spring's first laughing touch rushes in confusion down the green slope, so her awkwardness dissolved in quick words, golden as the wind's breath above beds of roses.

"This?" Rentzdorf said. "Great God—this? Oh, you heaven of heavens, you God-given Amalie! Now I understand. But why? Why? And to-day?"

"Last night—what you said last night—" and with a vivid blush she added, "I wished to give you my youth—what I have left of it!"

He did not like the sentence, and she divined this. Yet like soaring music the wonder of this woman's love was on him, an increasing glory—this, and the might of her beauty, strong as Circe's wine, sweet as the siren's singing.

For ever—to possess this woman for ever; amid inviolate leisure, day by day, night by night, living hour by hour together the long love-death, the long love-life that their hours would be, steeped in everlastingness! "It is as well," she had once said, lifting her heavy brow, "that we have to separate sometimes; for if we were together it is certain we should not discredit Vienna by living too long!"

But like a glint of evil across this transport came the question: His art? Would a daily life with her aid or impede his art? It would free him, absent or present, from harassing damnable suspicions and jealousies. It would render unnecessary the terrible balm he had been forced to apply to the wound—the reasoning that, whatever craving or joy or delight was her delight, ought to be his, even if it were the delight in another's kiss. This hell that mocked heaven would be over. It would free him too

from those encounters with her husband the amused ironic stare—'What the devil can you see in my wife?' He had the answer at hand, this same dog-trainer 'saw' nothing in the Medici Venus, nothing in the frieze of the Parthenon. Yet it irked him; for that man had known her in her maidenhood.

The temptation was extreme, violent, sudden and all but irresistible.

But in an instant all was confounded by the question—"At what price?"

The answer was categoric,—"This woman's humiliation."

"She trusts me. I cannot trust her."

He turned to her.

"Well?" she said, gazing into his face. "Well?"

From brow to foot a breathing miracle, there she stood, compact of every excellence that on earth he had dreamed of in woman; in her character, even in her stormy exactingness, her jealous temper, her weakness, her strength, her habits of body and mind, an unwearying interest. For him at least other women existed but to set off this woman's perfections; or if desires for other women rose, as rise they must, at a passing perfume, the line of an arm or waist, they had been streams that, tributary, fed the greater river of his passion for Amalie; this Rentzdorf could say, not to her merely, but in solitude in the secret interviews with his own heart.

"Amalie . . ."

She turned swiftly, throwing back her veil.

"Ah, God, Heinrich, beloved, how I love you! How I love you!"

Her arms seized him; her mouth, stammering her ecstasy, was pressed against his mouth. In the transport of that embrace all foundered. Beauty by its own excess was in dissolution; life and form by their own excess hurried to self-destruction; but again, upon this swirling chaos and wreck-

age of worlds, her pallid face rose like a lotus upon midnight pools, and her mouth still thirsted for his with a thirst which time might annihilate but never assuage. Will, reason, the right course, the wrong course, argument and resolution—she had groped about amongst those formulas all that day, all these years; but once more, in a single blinding splendour, his desire and her desire flashing into identity with God's desire, all was answered, for all was vision.

Shuddering, their trembling hands still clung together, interlinked.

"Other things are means," Rentzdorf said slowly; "this is an end. No sublimity of doing or suffering excels this. Discomfort we shall find, you and I, whichever path we take—nothing matters, for this shall be with us."

Something elemental yet eternal, absorbing the heart, making the senses a transport utterly, yet in this entrancement binding the soul, the senses' ancient critic; an instinct, yet so transfigured by the soul in its long voyagings that it was now the forlorn hope of a God, and of the same God the supreme emotion; adding their glory to life's sanctitudes, unavailable livious ecstasy was absolutely redeeming art from the desecration of praise, for in this oblivious ecstasy was at once art's inspiration and its hallowing force. Such was the passion of Rentzdorf and Amalie.

"As for last night, it is the familiar cause, Amalie. When we are apart the world saturates us; when we come together too suddenly its poison is still in us. That is how I explain last night."

They stood up. He saw the slow tears sparkling on her lower eyelids; but on the face was happiness, celestial sweetness. A strange gaiety raised them above fear and above hope, a tragic lightheartedness, the serenity of Greek heroes and Greek gods, secure of the leisure of eternity.

"What is the place of laughter?" she had once asked. She knew it now—the superfluous overflowing "joy," the superfluous overflowing consciousness of the world-doom in God's doom.

This day, this hour was the most consummate in their love. Both made this attestation, both made this interpretation of the day.

But night was on them unawares. Northward, the Wienerwald heights stood out in blue-black masses. All between was flooded with a dying golden light. The shadows on the grass had lost their outlines: under the trees the twilight was thickening fast.

An ineffable sadness came down on both. The end of things—in nature, in this day's drama, in this long war—life's end, the end of their passion, world's end, time's end, God's end.

"I had forgotten," she said, rousing herself. "Rothgar has cast a shoe: we must take the short cut to the stables."

She gathered up her skirt, and, her whip under her arm, she began to descend the path. But she turned, and her eyes were preternaturally lustrous through her veil.

"Dearest, dearest . . . We can ride together the last part of the way? Now you must talk to Toc. She will want to tell you of her engagement."

CHAPTER XIV

A VIENNESE POET AND A VIENNESE COMPOSER

I

SAVARY'S prognostication was justified. Less than thirty-six hours had elapsed since the attempt upon Napoleon's life and already in Vienna that attempt was forgotten. A silent shrug of the shoulders was the answer to any remark or conjecture about Staps's purpose or his fate.

"The Treaty—has the Emperor ratified the Treaty?"

That alone was worth thinking about; that alone worth speaking about.

At about eleven o'clock that night Rentzdorf and the big young Russian attaché, Dmitri Miklailovitch Uvarow, entered the celebrated Café Florian in the Alleegasse. It was crowded with visitors of both sexes.

"Ah, what is that?" Uvarow suddenly asked in Russian.

The Beresanyi "Chor," a celebrated tzigane orchestra raised by Prince Adolf Beresanyi, had slipped into the capitol, that afternoon, and were now, amid the clapping of hands and the jingling of glasses, climbing noisily into their places in the small amphitheatre that had long stood empty.

"Machiavelli is right," said the Russian. "Men are in all times and in all places the same. Alaric is at the gates —but Rome crowds to the circus as usual."

He looked at Rentzdorf. The latter, his left hand thrust into the folds of his cloak, stood surveying the shifting, richly coloured scene. His quiet astonished his companion.

"He is a Viennese," thought the Russian, "and knows Vienna's ways. In Russia during the cholera the danger to those we hate makes our own danger endurable. Bah, Austria has signed a shameful peace; but each man's disgrace to-day is also the disgrace of his rival."

At a table near Uvarow, a clenched fist made the glasses and decanters ring; and in a low, guttural, emphatic voice the table-thumper began to expatiate importantly on the secret clauses of the Treaty. He was an honest Moravian grain-merchant and, in his own trade, sensible enough and shrewd; now he was posing as a Kaunitz.

"Defeated?" said he. "Not we; not a bit of it! You'll see. Bonaparte knows what he is about. So does our Kaiser. It's a drawn game. What?"

At a more distant table a voice gave the toast—"Franz der Zweite, unser Kaiser! Hoch! Hoch!" Every man and woman in the room sprang to their feet—"Our Emperor! Austria for ever!" The tzigane orchestra burst into the national hymn.

"That is not how Paris would acclaim Bonaparte if he had returned defeated," the Russian said to Rentzdorf, his brown eyes filming; for, like many young men of the era, Uvarow was "sentimentalisch," and easily moved.

Rentzdorf shrugged his shoulders. He was less disposed than the Russian to admire this undistinguishing devotion to a monarch, heroic or commonplace, bungler or man of genius.

II

Turning at last, Rentzdorf crossed a passage and pushed the door of one of the private rooms that ranged round

the immense public room. Uvarow was about to follow him in, but with an imperative glance Rentzdorf laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Is it here?" the Russian asked.

For answer Rentzdorf pointed to the figure of a man seated behind a table, the sole occupant of the room.

Beethoven, his head with its mane of jet-black hair propped on both his hands, was engrossed in thought, apparently oblivious of the riot and surging joy around him. His lips worked; occasionally a violent thrust forward of the lower jaw showed that he was chanting or muttering to himself. A note-book lay on the marble table-top between his elbows. Abstracted and withdrawn, he sat there in the lonely sublimity of stern and profound thought. Years and deafness had created about him a solitude in which he had ceased to expect intruders.

Rentzdorf pushed open the glass door, and stood aside to allow Uvarow as his guest to enter. Beethoven, lifting his head, stared at the Russian. His astonishment became anger, and the cry, "Heraus!" Out with you, was on his lips. Suddenly behind Uvarow's shoulder he saw Rentzdorf. His face was instantly transfigured, and with a joyous shout he sprang to his feet.

"Heinrich, du lieber Heinrich!"

He threw his arms about his friend, repeating his name, showering questions—Why had he left Buda-Pesth? Where was the Archduke? And this treaty? What infamy? And then the question, not at once intelligible to Rentzdorf,—"Der Knabe? What about the lad? What news of the young hero?"

Rentzdorf introduced Uvarow.

"Ach, *was?*" Beethoven protested. "No apologizing! Well, you must forgive a German. On so black a day some wish company,"—he indicated the next room—"some wish solitude. But you, I am glad to see you."

Uvarow, in whom something of the Petersburg student still lingered, had forgotten his grim reception. He was for the first time in front of the idol of his musical enthusiasm; and though he did not find in him the god-like physiognomy he had anticipated, nevertheless he saw a face and bearing and gestures and energy *vraiment extraordinaires*, as he wrote to his sister next day, "and like those of a man possessed with a demon that leaves him no rest but tears and rends him incessantly."

He began an address fitting the occasion. This was a Russian craze or trick of the epoch. Potiamkin, the Orloffs, Panin, Speranski himself, all indulged in it. It was a parvenu nation's way of attesting its good manners. "I am a lover of nature," said he; and he placed his hand on his left breast and looked earnestly at Beethoven. "I can endure privations; I love simplicity and am sensitive—*sensible*—to the innocence of rustic life. I have heard the great music of your German masters and I have heard the ocean in a storm; but never till I heard your divine Fifth Symphony" —(the Sixth was in 1809 numbered Five)—"never have I heard all these—the brook, the thunder, the ocean, the tempest, in one piece, vivid as in a picture of the immortal Claude Lorraine."

Was this harangue impromptu or studied? The pleasant thing was that it was sincere; the fatiguing thing was that Beethoven, deaf and understanding French badly, had not taken in a single syllable.

"Was sagt der Herr?" he asked Rentzdorf curtly.

Rentzdorf translated the Russian's high-flown speech into temperate German. M. Uvarow, he explained, was an attaché in the Russian service, and in music an enthusiast for the German school; he had found in Beethoven's own works, especially in his symphonies, an inspiration greater than that of Haydn or Mozart. Finally, M. Uvarow had only this one night in Vienna; to-morrow he was returning to Troppau.

"Ah, to Troppau?" said Beethoven. "Excellent! Is that rock of German liberty still there—minister vom Stein?"

Uvarow assured him that Stein was still at Troppau; he himself had indeed obtained the honour of a long conversation, walking to and fro in the village meadows with him and with M. Pozzo di Borgo only four days ago. M. Stein had spoken with admiration of Austria's valour; of Stadion's and Wellington's victories.

"He is not afraid then? He, at least, does not despair of Germany?" Beethoven asked. "Ach, das ist doch wohl."

But he sank immediately into sombre silence.

Stein's name had in 1809 a peculiar magnetism. It stood for ardour yet seriousness; it was free from the intemperate zeal of the Tugendbund. It was dissociated from the half-rebellious anarchy of Schill's and Brunswick's risings. Finally, it stood for the unconquerable moral grandeur of Germany ranged against the violence and lawless might of Napoleon.

All at once Beethoven reverted to the Staps incident. The thick-rimmed spectacles were flung off; the black eyes blazed, and the brick-red countenance seemed to stream with a kind of glory:

"Der Knabe? Der Knabe—this heroic lad—where is he? What has been done with him? What have you heard? That blood-gorged tyrant, ach, if I could fight battles as I can write music! But it is useless, useless. Blind chance rules this earth—blind chance."

Rentzdorf was puzzled. He had heard the rumour of the attack on Napoleon, but in 1809 rumours of that kind were rife and no man of sense any longer listened in them. In his own circle Staps's action was discredited or disbelieved. Bolli himself had witnessed the incident and declared positively that it was merely the arrest of a young

Viennese of the middle class too eager to present a petition, or simply too eager to see the French Emperor.

Uvarow, however, after a furtive glance towards Rentzdorf, began in loud French to explain the affair. Beethoven, only half understanding, shook his head impatiently and sat muttering to himself; "Murder and yet murder. Still he goes on triumphing. What will be the end? And God does nothing. God does not say a word!"

All that summer he had been oppressed by the spectacle of continuous triumphant wrong. Was Napoleon never to be overthrown? He had begun to question the justice of God,—that exterior personal God whom, in the fashionable deism of many cultured minds in France and Germany, Beethoven conceived as a beneficent and over-ruling despot, rewarding and punishing in some indistinct Heaven or Hell, all men and women for the good or evil performed on this earth. Was God a God of righteousness? Why then was He silent now? Why did He sit still whilst Napoleon rode in blood from victory to victory?

And, strangely enough, these contradictions had fitted in with his personal mood as an artist. For during the preceding winter and all the summer the subject of Egmont had obsessed him—on the one hand, the irresistible power of an Alva, bigoted, crafty, and pitiless, and, on the other, ranged against it, the royally confiding strength, faith, and heroic idealism of Egmont. Why was the latter destroyed? True to his temper, and to his resolve to find something "good" in apparent evil, Beethoven had struggled to console himself for Egmont's death on the scaffold by the contemplation of his after fame. Was not the glory of an independent Netherlands his work? Was it not like a spacious tree rooted in his bloody grave? There, he reasoned, was Egmont's divine reward; there was Egmont's "heaven." And during these last two days, the rumours of the young Thuringian's attempt on Napoleon's life, con-

fused, unreliable, vague and changing as they were, had nevertheless wrought him to the height. It was Egmont's heroism over again, but in Germany, not the Netherlands; and in an agony of illumination he had jotted down one of the sublimely terrible phrases which he afterwards wove into the "Victory Hymn" of the *Egmont* overture—the most deathless monument whether to Friedrich Staps or to "Young Germany," the Germany of 1809 and the Germany of 1813, that genius or devotion will ever raise.

The motifs of that hymn and other motifs, nebulous or precise, breathing the same lofty clear defiant spirit, had been thundering in his ears all day; and all day in his dingy lodging near the Kärnthner he had sat brooding over the young Thuringian's action and the possibilities of his fate. Rentzdorf's return alone had dragged him from his lair. Yet to-night there could be nothing of the banter and exuberant wit, the huge laughter, and the fond interchange of ideas upon poetry and music without end, which, a year before, had made their meetings so memorable.

III

In the pause of silence—the silence which succeeds the first glad outburst in a meeting of friends—Uvarow, with ceremonious grace, held out his snuff-box. Rentzdorf, though he detested the practice, accepted, out of courtesy to a stranger. Beethoven brusquely declined.

"He neither smokes nor snuffs," Rentzdorf said apologetically to the Russian. And in a rapid aside, he added, "Speak straight to him, looking at him whilst you speak."

"He is deaf then? The report is true?"

"Yes."

"Has it lasted long? Is there no hope of a cure?" Uvarow began again, speaking in an awestruck, over-excited whisper.

"Do not whisper to me, I beg of you," Rentzdorf remonstrated. "Speak openly, but low. It began nine years ago. He has tried every remedy."

"How frightful! How piteous!"

"Piteous? Yes; as a blinded eagle."

Beethoven, thinking from Rentzdorf's unconcerned face that his talk with Uvarow was on some everyday topic, placed his hand on the poet's shoulder and looked at him with smiling affection.

"You at least look *famos*, splendid," he said; "and you *are* a hero. We others, we speak about heroes; you are the thing itself. And I saw your Liechtenstein yesterday and took off my hat to him as I would not take it off to the Emperor. He has the Roman air—high, unimpeded, serene. So sieht ein Held aus! Yes; and so you too were at the ball last night? I go no longer to balls. At five and thirty one's dancing days are done." He frowned.

Rentzdorf knew very well that Beethoven was forty or near it; but it was a weakness of the composer to understate his years. It was part of the fashion and swagger of his epoch. Every man wished to do, or to seem to have done, great things in his youth, in the shortest possible time, or in the most disadvantageous circumstances—to have written poems whilst dressing before or undressing after a ball; to have composed overtures in the small hours after a midnight debauch.

"Five and thirty!" Uvarow protested in imperfect German. "That is nothing. Marshal Davout——"

"This infamy!" Beethoven resumed. "O this infamy! Germany is buried in this peace as in a grave."

His gesture was horribly expressive. His habitual look of "possession" was intensified.

"Blind chance! That is the heart of things. You are a warrior and a thinker, Heinrich; I am only a poor artist. What gives this man his power? The whole earth writhes

under his iron heel. Why? Ah, would to God I were blind as well as deaf—deaf and blind as this stone."

He struck the marble top of the table with his clenched fist. Uvarow saw the knuckles whiten and the coarse hairs on the back of the fingers stand out in odd distinctness. The nail of the thumb was flattish and ill kept.

Rentzdorf, familiar with Beethoven's temperament, felt the approach of one of those moods of colossal gloom which echo in his later sonatas and symphonies. He never dreamed of criticizing these attacks. Ill health, poverty, the envious insults of rivals or enemies, the veiled strictures or caricatures of professed friends, his best works misunderstood or misrepresented—how could Beethoven be expected to imitate the equable subservience of a Haydn, or assume Goethe's staid olympianism? And Rentzdorf knew of the venomous attacks that very spring upon his two latest symphonies; the imaginary conversation of the tortured instruments written in gall and envy by Weber; Raupach's printed sneers at "this crazy, half-blind, half-deaf old pianist."

"If it were not for my art, my divine art . . . You understand me, Heinrich; you at least understand me."

He flung forward his arms. His huge heavy head rested on his wrists for several seconds.

When he lifted his face its look had changed.

"Resignation and submission," he said, speaking rather to himself than to his listeners. "Yes, submission: but to the will of God. We may be slaves, we Germans; but suffering, unwilling slaves! We are not Italians. We struggle, we resist, and therefore we are unconquered."

Rentzdorf, who spoke openly to Beethoven of poetry and art, could rarely, if ever, express to him, unless ironically, his convictions upon religion and human fate. The "verger's intellect," which in a bitter letter to Amalie he had attributed to Bach, raised a barrier between himself

and Beethoven also. The oftener he met him the more fixed became his conviction that the tenor is closely allied to the composer, and that music amongst the greater arts is the nearest to that of the mountebank or the six-fingered monstrosity. Uvarow, on the other hand, who was a reader of Fénélon, and a frequenter of the Masonic and Quietist coteries of Petersburg, was excited by Beethoven's method of self-consolation. It resembled Quietism; and he now quoted eagerly the maxims—"Do nothing; for all is done . . . Resist not evil . . . Imitate the water, the lowliest yet mightiest of things."

"What is our deliverance?" he said with a fine boyish earnestness. "What puts us *beyond* Napoleon's power? To desire only the things which the tyrant cannot assail; to renounce pleasures and gold; above all, to renounce praise, Bonaparte's god. He who covets men's praise shall wither under men's curses. That will be Bonaparte's doom."

Earnestness always impressed Beethoven. He made the young Russian repeat the words in German, he himself alternately nodding his huge head, or tapping the table to indicate his disapprobation or misunderstanding.

IV

Rentzdorf sat watching the two men's faces.

Uvarow, his voice out of hand, was urging the stale thesis that Napoleon ought to have made permanent peace long ago; Washington would have done this, even Moreau; but in Bonaparte "lust of dominion" had driven him to violate the Peace of Amiens.

Impatient, Rentzdorf asked abruptly:

"Where would you have had him stop? In 1797? He dared not. Campo Formio was a truce and he knew it. The monarchies were arming, Russia, Austria, Prussia, England. He struck at England in Egypt. His absence

in Egypt led to the loss of his conquests in Italy: Egypt, therefore, led to Marengo. And after Marengo, how is he, First Consul, absolute despot of unexampled armies, the inheritor of the glory at once of the Revolution and of the Bourbon monarchs, to acquiesce in England's retention of half this planet? Rome's legions conquered the world at the point of their swords. England has filched it like a common thief whilst Europe slept. What soldier or statesman who has taken upon himself the imagination of a great people can tolerate this without a secret rage? It is for *cuistres* to discuss whether Pitt were willing or unwilling to surrender Malta. Bonaparte, as Louis XV.'s successor, has Rossbach to efface; he has Plassey to avenge. But Jena did this, you will say. Why did he not stop there? Jena, like Austerlitz, is a phase in a gigantic plan, which, when complete, shall un-write the history of the centuries. Go back five years. His armies in 1804 are cantoned round Boulogne, ready for the invasion of England; but *presto!* he discovers that behind him Austria is in arms; that Russia is in arms; that Prussia is about to join them. In a second he abandons his grip which was tightening on England, and, in order to secure his communications for the future, he determines to handcuff Europe. Thus Boulogne leads to Ulm and Ulm to Austerlitz, and Austerlitz to Jena, to Eylau, Friedland, and Tilsit. After Tilsit, he resumes the campaign against England. England seizes the Danish fleet. 'Politics is robbery then?' he says to his legions. 'Robbery be it, and he the greatest who robs the most violently or the most adroitly. Let your iron "greatness" be the destructor of their hoary worm-eaten pretence-goodness.' And that, great God, that is the hour that we Austrians think our opportunity! Fate's mandate, we imagine, had gone forth against Fate's minion! We, we pose as the saviours of Europe! Wagram, a bloodier Austerlitz, is our instructress—violà tout. But the victor? He will trample

out the revolt in Spain, and next summer, with Russia as his extreme right wing, Prussia and Hanover as his right centre, Portugal and Spain as his left wing, France and Belgium and Holland as his colossal centre, and now with Austria as his rear, he will realize the Boulogne design. For who will stay that avalanche? And England under the Caudine Forks, nothing stands between him and world-empire. It is a fair stake to play for—the despotism of a planet—n'est-ce pas? No; I for one am not prepared to say where Bonaparte should have stopped. Besides, to say 'ought' to what is past, to whine for the 'might-have-been'—what idleness! Only when we know the past as inevitable as well as irrevocable do we begin to understand either past or present. Time, existence, the past, the present, man, God—these are not problems but the answer to a problem."

"And yet," exclaimed Uvarow, "you have fought against this 'grand entraineur des hommes?'"

"I have fought and still fight against him. To that end are we Austrians."

It was Beethoven who broke the silence.

"Yes, Heinrich; you have spoken a word. Du lieber Gott, what drama, und was für ein Held! what a Hero! Napoleon Bonaparte! What music that name made me hear! What battle music and what a glory! Italy, the Bridge of Lodi, Arcola, Rivoli, the Pyramids, Marengo—he taught the tyrants a dance! Ach, das war schön, herrlich. Yet now—the change! But he is led by the hand,—and to the abyss. Yes; what rose out of the gulf must back to the gulf again. God's path is on the sea. He is led by the hand, I tell you, and to the abyss. I see it. I see it."

Uvarow gave a little forced mirthless laugh. It was the kind of laugh that lets light in upon a human character.

"To a gulf indeed! But where will it open, and when,

to receive this new Mettus Curtius and his infernal hosts? That's what I ask. Eh?"

He turned to Beethoven and then to Rentzdorf; but something in the poet's face prevented the Russian from continuing. He had intended in all good faith to place at this point the fatuous inanity already noised abroad by Madame de Krüdener—the white angel named Alexander I. striking its ethereal talons into the black angel named Napoleon.

"Tell me, Ludwig," Rentzdorf said in the pause, "where is the point at which you begin to see in Bonaparte the asserter of eternal wrong?"

Beethoven, to the Russian's astonishment, starting up like a man waking from a frightful dream, burst into a furious tirade, not against Napoleon, but against Austria. His features were convulsed; his eyes, like burning lamps, flashed from side to side.

"Gott in Himmel, you have spoken a word! You have put in my soul old bad thoughts, old glorious thoughts. Austria! What is Austria to me? Austria—what seas of blood! The tyrant-oppressor, the everlasting sure friend of darkness! Hatred of Austria has made men heroes. Alliance with Austria is the embrace of a corpse, breathing from her corrupting lips a breath that turns her lover into stone. I am a Rheinlander, praise be to God! Yes, from the free Rhein stream am I."

His jungle of black hair was, to Rentzdorf's half-amazed, half-amused survey, full of twisting adders; yet he felt no indignation at Beethoven's outburst. Austrian as he was, he regarded men like Ferdinand II., the murderer of Wallenstein, and Leopold I., the murderer of the Hungarians, as a cultured liberal Englishman might regard Henry VIII., the murderer of Sir Thomas More, or James II., the instigator of the Bloody Assize.

Gesticulating, Beethoven started afresh.

"Those who envy me, traduce me. To-night, in the night of Germany's honour, rising in insolent might, they would tread me down. Triumphant slaves shout round the triumphant robber. O my soul answer them not! To their fury, oppose calm! Blind hate, blind chance—that is the world. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive?' Daily I live that maxim. Long was I in doubt; but no longer am I in doubt. I have fought in trust, in affection for all the human kindreds—for all of them, all! Evil-entreated, I have sung goodness; in misery I have proclaimed joy. How has Austria requited me? Poverty, hideous daily penury, and poverty. I wait for the darkness, I creep out by night, because my coat is threadbare and my boots patched so that I cannot face my fellowmen in the sunlight. What slaves were Haydn, Mozart, to sell their art! To *sell* that—it is to sell God! Oh, the vileness! Comfort? Riches by playing the lackey? I trample on it, shuddering with disgust at what I must trample on! No; I will never give in, never, never, never, never!"

His emotion seemed to shake the room. The thick finger-tips of his left hand tapped the marble table convulsively; but his countenance was iron, and dun as iron the features.

With an indomitable look and gesture—defiance, malediction, grief, regret, scorn—he continued:

"Bonaparte's treason—there is the cause. He had the chance: breathless the human race waited. The star that burned above Corsica, a balefire to tyrants, but to us, the star of our hope,—and what radiance over France! What music I heard, what pæans, what mournful exultant dirges over dead heroes, fallen, fallen, yet victorious! Bonaparte! If I forget him, may my right hand forget! In the midnight of my heart his strength strengthened me. Fight on, fight, fight, fight! Heroic battle, heroic joy, heroic glory,

heroic pain. I remember; I remember. He came to strike down my strong enemies—fear, doubt, madness, and despair within me; oppression and wrong outside me. He came to break all our fetters, to bring comfort to those that were in prison. He came, the light-bringer, the asserter of glory, proclaimer of equality, brotherhood, the everlasting freedom and greatness of man. Glory to man in the highest! What a lightness! O those dawns! 'France and Bonaparte!'; that was our watchword—'France and Bonaparte!' At Arcola, Rivoli, Lodi, Marengo, the priests and the despots of the world trembled as at the earthquake's tread. O God, how he is fallen, fallen!"

In Beethoven's own history—that erebus pit of disease, mortifications, ceaseless combat, unsurrendering independence, anger at the prosperity of wrong—in the desperate crises of the years when, his deafness irremediable, he stood on the brink of madness or suicide, he had in Bonaparte's victories found an inspiration to his own struggle, and the conflict and the gratitude had become the *Eroica*.

Uvarow, very pale, his thin Slav volubility silenced, his little moustaches twirling upwards, his mouth a little open, yet most intent, sat with his eyes fixed on Beethoven.

"But I will tell you, Heinrich," the latter went on. "To you I will speak. I have been thinking of it much. What have I to do but think? Well? What? *Macbeth*,—I have been composing it. These three weeks, these three months, it is the thought of my thought. *Macbeth*—what is it? It is Bonaparte; but to me Bonaparte is more appalling. What is Shakespeare's theme, eh? A loyal soldier, brave amongst the brave, is in an hour made a treacherous, damnable, midnight assassin. How? Shakespeare answers, 'The witches, the blasted heath. They start the evil thing in Macbeth.' But in Napoleon—what set going the evil in him? Who was the tempter? Dark mystery; murder on murder, D'Enghien, the

noble Pichegru, conqueror of Holland; the Englishman Wright; Villeneuve with his gashed throat; Palm; Palafox, —so this new Macbeth rushes on his career of blood; and so on, on to the abyss, to the abyss! But I have the sketches here——"

He rummaged in the huge pockets of his rough coat made of tanned sheepskin. He found many things, thrusting some back again, depositing others on the table—an old empty snuff-box, a piece of cheese, a broken shoebuckle, some coins wrapped in paper, three or four pencils with used-up, flattened points.

"I lose everything nowadays; mislay everything. Everywhere I am robbed. I have changed my lodgings seven times. Everywhere slothful or thieving servants; dishonesty, cheating——"

"Do not bother, Ludwig; I know what you can make of such a subject."

Beethoven, startled by something in Rentzdorf's voice, for, deaf as he was, he had an amazing power of detecting an accent, the naunce of a tone—he seemed indeed to hear *tones* only—stopped in his search and looked up quickly.

"You do not like my comparison? My plan for a Macbeth-Napoleon opera does not please you? Hein?"

Rentzdorf was nonplussed for a second. Aloof from most men, he rarely contradicted their theories or criticized their works. But with Beethoven he was sincere.

"Doch, Heinrich?" the composer insisted. "Ja? Speak then."

"Well," Rentzdorf said with a laugh, "are they so certain, those murders? And is it Napoleon who has changed, or we ourselves, Ludwig; you and I? For instance, was he so bound to be our leader? And he, our fate-appointed leader, so-called—what right had we to demand that he should lead us whither *we* desired to go? And that limited, noble, patriotic Napoleon that you desiderate—is the loss

to be so regretted? The man of Corsica he gave us in his debate with Paoli. We have dozens such in Hungary, in Poland, in Ireland, in Bosnia. The man of France he gave us. We have dozens such again—Moreau, Washington, Kléber, Hoche. But the Man of Destiny?"

Rentzdorf then hinted that in Napoleon there might be a fate incomparably more tragic and mysterious than that of the stage-prophecyings, witches, blasted heaths, and air-drawn daggers of *Macbeth;* a tragedy in which glimpses of the world-tragedy, avant-couriers of the world-doom, might appear.

"Here on this earth, and out there amongst the star-galaxies, a God is in conflict; out there as here a God works, moving in and through this suffering universe to an end beyond itself and beyond Himself—to an end in which all this strife, this rage and ecstasy and anguish that is Being's essence and Being's God shall cease or be transformed. The Nirvana not of man but of God. That is Destiny. That is Reality."

"Total Annihilation?" Uvarow said. "This universe and its originator self-destroyed together? That is very complete."

Rentzdorf did not answer, but still addressing Beethoven:

"The nearer a religion, a philosophy, or a poem or a symphony approaches to the tragic will which underlies the worlds, the more supreme is that symphony or that book. That is the great 'ought' of art—your art—and mine—the only 'ought.' If you and I have been alone hitherto——"

He stopped, half irritated with Beethoven, half irritated with himself at speaking thus openly.

Beethoven, who had not heard Uvarow's exclamation, said sharply:

"But why do you stop? You said, 'If you and I have been alone hitherto—' What were you about to add?"

"This perhaps," Rentzdorf said. "Bonaparte may be

of our company—that is all; his disillusion your disillusion; his despair your despair and mine. Who knows? At Arcola he too doubtless thrilled to our ardours, wished to be the eastern star to a new earth. Who knows? Now, he goes his wild road, certain only of the black nothingness over which this planet is swung, certain of the world-doom, certain above all of his own doom."

"Napoleon a tragic disillusioné?" Uvarow exclaimed. "That is novel."

Beethoven for a considerable time said nothing. His brow was heavily lined and he was evidently pondering Rentzdorf's words and their undermeaning. Then, speaking so loud that even amid the hurly-burly the guests at the nearer tables turned and stared through the glass door curiously and, exchanging a word, went on with their card-playing or their drinking:

"I only half understand you, Heinrich. The will of God—we must submit to that will. He knows what is best for us. I cling to that faith, Heinrich—a just and personal God, divine retribution." And with a blow on the table and a fierce glance—"Ja I believe in the goodness of man, the goodness of God, and in the immortality of the soul."

"Who asks you to believe in anything else, Ludwig?"

"You do. Your writings, your poems, your dramas—I have been reading them."

Rentzdorf smiled in ironic expostulation.

"That was great waste of time, Ludwig; but you will get over the bad effects, I daresay. Certainly I am the last man on earth to wish to interfere with any man's religion."

Instantly Rentzdorf regretted his impatience.

His annoyance was the annoyance with an imperfect, "tied" thing, with this man, a work of nature, as with a work of art in which the Beauty is not free but still imprisoned. For why should this man, whose music seemed the express image in sound of the most daring soul-motives,

emotion-ideas of his own *Prometheus*, sit here and talk like a Vienna shop-keeper in his Sunday coat?

But Beethoven was again fumbling in his huge pockets. This time he discovered what he wanted and banging an iron-clasped note-book on the table, he hurriedly turned the leaves; and keeping it away from Uvarow's inspection, for he was always suspicious of strangers, he said:

"Look at this. What do you think? Ha?"

There was the most eager expectancy in the dark luminous eyes.

It was not his *Macbeth* sketches; it was his *Egmont* overture, rough and in germ still, but to Rentzdorf's scrutiny already visibly announcing the colossal might and splendour that were to come.

"This is tragedy; this is heroism. You understand me here, Ludwig—not half but whole. This is tragedy, a trumpet-call to the things which matter, challenging the soul. This is heroism."

"Ach—was sagt der Schalk? See how he flatters me!"

V

Uvarow looked around him. It was near midnight. In the café the excitement had become more uproarious. News had kept arriving hour by hour, news from Linz, news from Brünn, of the movements of Davout's troops; news from Znaim. Napoleon, it was reported, had already left Schönbrunn. The Emperor Francis was on his way from Altenburg. From every street there seemed to come a rumour in the darkness of great bodies of men on the march.

Part of the floor had been cleared and dancing had begun. From the faces of the men Uvarow turned to the women, comparing them with those whom, on a similar night, he would have seen in a Petersburg café. These foreign shapes seemed more elegant; their strange eyes, strange language, piqued the curiosity of youth.

Suddenly his glance, which had wandered from figure to figure, comely matrons, Slav brunettes or slim blonde-haired German maidens, came to a pause, arrested by a bizarre apparition. This was a girl of seventeen or eighteen robed in scarlet, with a large white hat, with clustering feathers, and holding a long white wand. Her features expressed great softness, every motion of her figure, seduction. Men's eyes as they watched her were filmed as with smoke.

The tziganes played on; the dancers came out of the circle wiping their foreheads.

"To the victors the spoils!" thought the Russian. "And the vanquished are the dead; the victors those who live, and their chief prize a woman's waist—those who have the will or the strength to clasp it."

A burst of ribald laughter at a table near him ended in the Buda students' refrain, chanted by a dozen voices and accompanied speedily by the tziganes and by knots of young men everywhere about the huge room:

> "Nolo me mortuum, nolo me mortuum;
> Nolo me mortuum basiaret!"

"Hier bin ich Mensch!" Uvarow thought, and, chameleon-like, taking on Faust's colour, he turned to Beethoven. "Hier bin ich Mensch," he repeated aloud, "hier darf ich sein!"

Beethoven smiled agreeably.

He too, whilst Rentzdorf looked at the score, was watching the scene, nodding his head to the tzigane tune; and, as his eyes travelled from group to group—the drinkers, the twining figures of the dancers through the smoke-dimmed air, the youthful flushed faces, the go and come of the tziganes' elbows, the women's figures—the scene had provoked something of the temper of the Dionysos Symphony for which he left merely notes.

Thus midnight crept past. A new day was born.

"You are leaving us?" the Russian exclaimed.

Rentzdorf had risen.

"Yes," he said, and in a lower voice added, "but you need not come with me. Stay and get better acquainted with Beethoven."

The latter looked as if he wished to accompany his friend, but Rentzdorf by a few words in the Viennese patois iterated Uvarow's anxiety to talk with him.

Rentzdorf himself wished to be alone.

An unconquerable desire even at this hour had seized him, if not to see Amalie at least to see the windows behind which she lay.

CHAPTER XV

"SO STIRBT EIN HELD!"

I

NAPOLEON'S decision in the Staps case had been communicated to General Lanier, the temporary commandant of the arsenal, at seven o'clock on Saturday evening.

The instructions were explicit. The prisoner was to be shot within the arsenal before daybreak on the 15th, at a place selected by the duc de Rovigo. The Emperor's words were "avant le point du jour." This phrase Savary translated into 5.30 A.M. adding the following details,—at five o'clock two of the slabs which paved the "Watch-tower" court were to be raised, a grave six feet long, seven deep, and three wide was to be dug; a stout pole was to be thrust into the ground not more than two feet from the edge of the grave; the prisoner was to be bound to this pole, shot, and at once buried. All blood-stains were to be carefully removed, and every trace of the moving of the slabs obliterated.

The depth of the grave, Savary calculated, would be an added security against the discovery of the remains by the Austrians when the arsenal and Vienna itself were finally evacuated by the French.

The prisoner was to be allowed neither priest nor confessor, no minister of religion of any kind. Writing materials, however, were to be offered him, and if he made use of

them or left any testamentary or written statements upon any subject whatever, such papers were to be delivered without delay to the duc de Rovigo; if, moreover, the prisoner made any verbal statement this also was to be communicated to the duc de Rovigo.

Savary, like Bonaparte himself, still adhered to the theory that the Tugendbund was implicated in the young Thuringian's desperate attempt. The pens, ink, and paper were placed at his disposal as an opportunity or an incitement to betray his confederates.

A strong guard had been set on Friday round that part of the arsenal in which the prisoner was confined. During that night and all Saturday he had been under surveillance in his cell; he had been observed seated on the edge of his plank bed, or walking up and down, gesticulating silently or staring up at the single small square window. Sometimes he would sigh heavily or mutter to himself in a melancholy or dejected manner. He had, of course, eaten nothing. The offer of writing materials he had gladly accepted. Once he had been seen to kneel and pray; then, rising, he had seized the pen and paper and for a considerable period written rapidly. The papers were seized, but their contents revealed nothing. They consisted of incoherent words, fragments of lofty eloquence, or patriotic poetry, a prayer for Germany, part of a letter to Goethe, full of vehement reproaches, an apostrophe to his great dead friend, Friedrich Schiller.

By Savary's orders this personal surveillance was on the night of the 14th relaxed, and at ten o'clock altogether suspended. Friedrich Staps thus passed his last night on earth unscanned and unwatched by his enemies' eyes.

II

Punctually at five o'clock on Sunday morning a bugle call, a short note followed by a longer holding note, startled

every hearer who at that dreary hour was awake in the streets or houses adjoining the arsenal. And everyone who heard that mournful summons started up or lay listening. What could that mournful sound portend? Was it an actual bugle-call or merely the prolongation of a dream?

The bugle announced to the grenadiers composing the arsenal guard that the fusiliers of the 12th regiment had arrived at the place selected by Savary and had begun their part in the drama.

Four minutes later, Sergeant Picquart, accompanied by ten grenadiers of the arsenal guard, approached the sentinels posted by the door of Staps's cell. After a parley the sergeant was admitted; and the gaoler, placing a lantern on the floor, withdrew.

Picquart at first could scarcely detect the prisoner, but the sound of his breathing came to him, now fitful, now regular.

Then he saw Staps.

He was fast asleep, stretched out on his plank bed, half undressed, his cheek on his right hand, his left hand hanging by his side. A rusty chain attached his right foot to an iron staple morticed into the wall which was here of great thickness.

The sergeant stood for several seconds looking at the prisoner. A flush that might have been fever but might also have been youth and healthy sleep was on the boy's face; the neck and throat were white and had in their soft outlines something womanish. The chin was bold and finely moulded.

"It is German, that face," thought the sergeant, "we do not grow such features west of the Rhine."

He approached the bed and was about to lay his hand on Staps's shoulder when the latter, turning on his back, murmured drowsily:

"It cannot be time to get up yet, Marie? It is too dark

and cold. Go away! This is Sunday . . . Ah, who are you?"

His eyes, wide open, sparkling and very blue, stared at the grenadier. He had not slept until two; he had then fallen into a broken slumber harassed by fearful dreams; but about four, this slumber had become a deep and restful sleep. In his dreams he was a child again in his Thuringian home, and Marie, his mother's old servant, had come to wake him and had come too soon. But at the clank of his chains and the rustle of the straw a panic fear blanched his features.

"You must get up and put on your coat," the sergeant said to him curtly, "and at once."

"For what?" the boy asked in his imperfect French.

"For what? A breakfast of lead. Come! Despatch! *Your* day's work is soon over."

The next instant Staps was on his feet.

"I am ready."

But he staggered and would have fallen; but steadying himself he sat down on the edge of his bed. His head was giddy; his fingers chilled to the bone; his brow hot; and horrible quiverings shook his body.

"I am very cold. Has there been a frost?" he asked in an indifferent voice, though his teeth clashed against each other.

"A few yards' walk will put that all right," was the gruff answer. "Come! Get into your coat and boots. It is time to start—unless . . ."

The notion had struck the sergeant that in a few minutes the prisoner would be dead, and that a dead man's boots were always difficult to remove.

Staps as he stopped to fasten his shoes noticed that they were muddy. His mind became confused. Why had Marie forgotten to clean them? His fingers fumbled at the strings helplessly, blindly; and all the time, he seemed to hear a

continuous deep sighing somewhere around him or within him.

"I am doing this for the last time. This morning I have to die."

The time for heroic action was past; the time for heroic suffering had come. And, at the word, he knew what that trembling was. It was the revulsion of his youth's forces, baulked of their joy, against this hideous annihilation, here in life's morning, by death. And a panic terror descended on him. He was conscious of the impulse to scream out, to implore his judges to spare him for one day, for half a day, even for an hour, till he saw the sun rise again.

"Ah, it is useless," he muttered, "useless . . . I have to go through with it. I have to be brave. Aid me, oh God, aid me! What do I do next? Ah, my coat—yes; I am ready, ready. Have we far to go?"

"Not very."

But after these two sinister words the sergeant's manner changed. The spectacle of this child's courage and of his fears—for Staps seemed to him younger than the youngest conscript of even that horrible year—had affected him with an unaccustomed emotion. He went to the prison door and looked out.

"Sit down," he then said with gruff kindness. "There's not a hint of daylight in the sky. I'll leave you to yourself a bit."

He himself was indifferent to religion; but this German boy, he reasoned, might he not wish to pray before death?

III

Left alone, Staps remained seated on the bed.

"To die . . . ?"

He began to wring his hands, yet taunting himself with his own weakness. "It is for Germany," he repeated, and he strove to invest that name with its glory. But like a

deceitful halo the glory had gone. The hero forms of poetry or history, Siegfried and Arminius, that he had imagined seated above their sepulchres in colossal gloom brooding Germany's wrongs, no longer rose at his summons. The maxims and verses which had sustained his enthusiasm sounded no longer in his ears.

"My book?" he suddenly thought. Where was his Schiller?

A shudder of despair ran over him. He had left it at the inn in Nussdorf. On Friday morning as he started for Schönbrunn he had thrust it into his pocket as usual; but it had encumbered his walk, for the dagger was in its place.

He looked around, bewildered by this new calamity.

Schiller's *Joan d'Arc?* It had been his final inspiration. Without it he had not the strength to die.

And in that midnight of the soul a strange vision came to him. He saw his dead mother's face, and she was looking out into the wet, windy darkness. "What is she looking for?" he asked himself with a tremor. She disappeared. The faces of young girls drawn up in a semi-circle now rose with the same hallucinatory clearness. They were singing in chorus. His own beloved was amongst them. But something hard and hateful at once insulated him from her and from them. In the uncertainty and inner war of spirit at Erfurt, she had not only been of no aid; she had acted the part of traitress and spy. She was gentle; had great modesty; yet at the first hint of his heroic purpose she had taken fright—obeyed her mother.

But his own mother?

He felt the ice of a supernatural awe on his face. In the unseen spirit-world it was for him she was waiting; it was for his coming she was looking out as in his Naumberg home she had on Saturday evenings looked out for his return through the dusk from Erfurt.

"Ah, God. . . . This it is; this it is."

He flung himself on his knees and began to pray.

There came the tramp of footsteps, the clang of arms, and, turning, Staps saw in the grey light the sergeant, and behind him the shakos and bayonet-points of the escort.

"You are ready? It's time we set out now. Why, what's this? Courage, my lad, courage! It's little you lose by dying young."

With a roughness that was intended to paralyse his own feelings and to hearten the prisoner he began to give orders, accompanying them with a series of oaths and exhortations. "Remember, you'll feel no pain; not a twinge. I've had a bullet through me often enough; you don't even know it at the time, though it's Hell afterwards. But you'll have no afterwards. D'ye see? And mind you don't wriggle your head about like this," he explained, moving his head quickly from side to side. "That makes the fellows nervous, and a bullet might smash your shoulder that ought to have gone through your brain or your heart. Then it's all to begin over again. But six bullets at six paces! . . ."

Suddenly the sergeant averted his eyes. The surprise and the fearful candour in the boy's glance were more than he could stand.

"Quick! March!" he shouted.

Staps was under the open sky. The shakos and bayonets instantly closed him in; and beyond them he saw only the dull iron-hued heavily buttressed walls.

"Right wheel!" the sergeant said angrily; for his men had started for the exit. "Thousand devils! Right wheel!"

Staps kicked his heel against the ground, attempting to thrust his foot better into the shoe; and feeling the fog in his throat he asked to have his coat buttoned. His chest had always been weak. But the grenadiers did not understand him, and, with a sudden reflection he muttered to

himself, "Ah, my God! What does it matter? The dead do not catch cold."

They were now passing the court-house in which he had been tried yesterday. In one of the escort he recognized, by a scar above the right eyebrow, a grenadier who had been on guard there.

"Es soll ein Wort sein," he thought with sudden illumination, and in an instant the scene of his trial stood out before him.

And repeating again like an incantation the phrase long afterwards famous in the German war of liberation and, in 1813, at the battle of the Nations, "Es soll ein Wort sein"—there shall arise a word—he imagined again the incident of which it formed a part. Savary, proud of the opportunity of displaying in the presence of soldiers his own knowledge of legal customs, had, throughout the trial, assumed the part of a *juge d'instruction*, and hurled reproaches and insults at his prisoner,—"You are a nobody; egged on by others to this cowardly and heinous act. Your very name is an absurdity. Who are those others? The Emperor knows how to reward repentance even at the eleventh hour."

"If I were a coward or a common man," Staps had cried, "how could I have conceived and executed this thing? My name may be ridiculous, but my deed is glorious for ever. It will burst exultant from my grave, and burn in front of the Army of Liberation. You may fire a thousand cannon; the youth of Germany has not made peace with you."

Yes; he knew it now. There were prophecyings in the air; his would be the word that would arise, his name deathless as Napoleon's.

"Halt!"

All stood still. Dazedly Staps looked around. He saw that he was in a narrow roofed-in passage. Was it here? Were they about to murder him in this hole?"

Instinctively he started forward, struggling to speak; but

at the same instant two bayonets were at his breast; his arm was seized in a vice by one of the grenadiers.

"Do not stir or speak or you are a dead man."

The cause of the delay was simple. Moved by a humane feeling, sergeant Picquart had sent forward a grenadier to ascertain whether the preparations in the courtyard were completed. He did not wish "the boy" to stand by whilst his grave was being dug.

The grenadier returned.

"Quick! March!"

In less than two minutes Staps saw in front of him a wide open court, and low down in the west a few stars struggling against the rapid onrush of the dawn. A vast pallor full of mysteriousness flooded the east; but in the west and south the stars were still visible. He recognized Orion, his baldric a glittering gem. Close behind the low wall he saw two or three wretched trees. Their leaves had been blown into the court and lay in withering heaps. In the same direction but on this side of the wall and well within it, several torches blazed. One torch half burnt out was smoking; another lay extinct on the ground. Men had been at work there; implements lay on the earth, spades, pick-axes, some pieces of rope. Three soldiers, their sleeves rolled up revealing their tanned, hairy arms, were conversing in low voices. Beside them he saw by the flare of the torches a freshly-dug trench. It was close to the wall, and was partly screened from sight by their figures.

Staps looked at this trench, at a pole which rose beside it, and at the two heaps of earth. He did not at once understand; but suddenly the truth flashed on him. It was for him, this trench. It was his grave.

IV

At a considerable distance from the trench, six men drawn up in a line stood watching the prisoner with interest.

Their uniform was not that of the arsenal guard, nor was it that of the grenadiers who had guarded Staps yesterday.

"Is that our man?" one of the six asked his comrade.

"Seems like it," was the curt answer.

"That baby? Why, I was told it was Levi, the damned spy, who nearly dished us in Lobau."

"He's a spy right enough," a grizzled, beery-looking veteran said to the conscript. "That's why his grave's dug so deep. When we're gone he might 'walk' and betray to the Austrian sappers our Emperor's plans."

"Silence in the ranks!" exclaimed a well-bred voice. "Silence, or by God, I'll have every man of you in irons. Christ's blood, is this a canteen?"

The speaker was Lieutenant Riouffe, a Marseillais, son of General Riouffe, one of the five hundred who in July '92 had made the famous march.

Riouffe had drunk too much the night before; he had staked rashly at faro and lost; he was leaving a mistress of whom he was not yet tired, a Slovak girl only sixteen years old with beautiful round eyebrows; he had not had more than two hours' sleep; the smoke from the torches stung his eyes which were blood-shot. Above all, he hated this morning's bloody task. Therefore he blustered and shammed anger.

Riouffe's irritable mood was also the cause of the delay. The soldiers had measured the grave by the height of one of their own number. Riouffe, who dreaded Savary, wished to have it tested, and there was neither a tape nor a foot rule to be found.

Staps understood nothing of this delay. His mind was struggling with a myriad painful and dazing thoughts. Yet, he noticed wistfully, the branches of the sickly trees were recovering their hues; the uniforms, the epaulettes, the faces were recovering their hues, not from the lanterns now and not from the torchlight. Would he see the sun again?

There was a shout. A grenadier was seen hurrying across the courtyard bearing something in his hand. It was a tape.

All approached the grave. A corporal jumped into it.

An unseen voice beside Staps whispered—"It is now!" And resolute his spirit answered "It is now!"

And now to his memory, which in his prison cell had betrayed him so cruelly, now to his memory there came crowding pell-mell the verses, the hero-maxims, Wolfram's, Schiller's, Uhland's, Fichte's. And with them came also fragments and echoes of a remoter, mightier music thrilling along his brain, fragments from the sagas and ancient war-hymns of his nation and his race; above all, these words from the death-song of a German warrior:

"The Gods will welcome me. See! They are come to call me home—the maidens whom Wotan hath sent to call me. The hours of my life are gone past. Laughing I die." And lo! in a forest-hung, shining region, out-splendouring the noon, Valhalla arose, and the hosts of Valhalla, and Sigurd turned—Sigurd was gazing at him.

"They are waiting to see how I shall die!"

The thought had leaped into words before the flash which lit up his darkening soul had quivered out of sight.

"Sigurd the Volsung!"

The name was like a sword dividing the firmament. Unmistakably as at Erfurt in his hour of dread spiritual doubt God's mandate had thundered its sacred message to him, so now in his extremity of weakness and fear that name thundered its hero-courage to him.

And visibly to his guards and to the bystanders Staps's figure seemed to gain in stature. He stood more erect; a light was on his brow; in his bearing there was the unconcern which is born of the last valour, passing into defiance as his glances now met their glances, alone, death-doomed but undefeated.

The corporal of fusiliers had climbed out of the grave. He spoke some words to Lieutenant Riouffe, and together the two came forward.

Staps looked at the officer; but the latter, averting his eyes, gave an order to the grenadiers. They fell back five paces, leaving the prisoner alone with his two guards.

"Germany for ever! Down with the oppressors! Germany! Liberty!"

Riouffe started, stood a second, staring at the prisoner.

"Que dit-il?" he asked at length.

Staps had spoken in German, his native accent very marked in his excitement.

No one answered. The officer shrugged his shoulders, and after a rapid glance aroun gave a short, sharp command.

Four grenadiers seized Staps, and in an instant jerked him forward, and began awkwardly but rapidly to bind him hand and foot to the pole fixed in the earth close to the grave.

Taken by surprise, the prisoner at first offered no resistance; but divining the object of this violence, he began to wrestle furiously with his executioners, protesting in German, "I can stand by myself. I am not afraid to die. I will not be bound like a thief. I will not." And again he struggled convulsively; and at the stare of stupor or menace in his captors' eyes, he cried out in French,—"Je ne veux pas—" But he could not at once recollect the word for "bound." It came to him, and in his vehemence he used a German idiom, "lié être," but immediately correcting himself he repeated it, gazing angrily, imploringly into the face of the grenadier with the scar who had been present at his trial.

"It will be better for yourself," was the stern answer after a steady look into the boy's face, and with a quick twist of the rope the work was completed.

The four grenadiers fell back to their places. Staps was left alone, bound to a stake beside an open grave.

In that moment of awful solitude the essential agony began. His grave, black and deep as a pit, was at his feet. There in a second or two he would lie unresisting and still, and those two heaps of earth be piled above him. And the forces of his youth, the horrible life-thirst, sobbed and clamoured and raged in him. Why was he to be shot down? What right had these Frenchmen to murder him? He cast an appealing, frightful glance at their six faces. One was a boy like himself; another under a fierce look was hiding the compassion he dared not or would not manifest. What made these men assassins—and those grenadiers that stood looking on, silent as those walls? He felt his mind confused; and he lost his way. The cords drawn violently across his breast oppressed his breathing. His throat was parched. His head began to turn from side to side, restlessly, feverously. But no one came to his aid. No one even noticed his misery. And the last loneliness swept around him, a most harrowing, stern loneliness, that of a world in which he saw nothing but enemies, strong and implacable, looking hate and death at him—here where he stood, pinioned by an open grave, his grave. He moaned, and an inward, supreme, fearful struggle began; and in that struggle the boy found his road, never to lose it again.

In the pause the balance still hung between victory and despair; but the immense hush and the white glories of the dawn, one mystic splendour from horizon to zenith, suddenly upbore him. He heard words and voices and singing, the riding of horses. He saw again the hero-shapes, colossal, like resting clouds or shadowy towers, waiting, waiting, regardful how he, a German, should die. His loneliness was gone; these were his companions; and vanquishing the sick weight on his heart, louder and clearer than he knew he shouted in French:

"Germany! God and my Fatherland! Germany!"

There was a brief word of command, a swift tramp of feet, a rattle of muskets, then an imperative:

"Left wheel! Halt!"

The fusiliers had swung forward. Their musket barrels gleamed dully in the whitening dawn. Lieutenant Riouffe now stood in line with them. The corporal took up a position beyond the former and a little behind him.

"It is Now!" thought Staps, with a shuddering vividness. "It is indeed Now!"

"Attention!"

Staps closed his eyes, but instantly opening them wide: "God for Germany!" he shouted, all his soul in exultation. "Down with the tyrant of the earth! Germany for ever! Germany!"

"Fire!"

When the muskets were grounded and the smoke slowly cleared the standers-by saw a dead face, the chin falling on the breast, in the eyes a ghastly stare of astonishment and agony; the shoulders lurched forward straining the ropes grotesque, ludicrous even, but fast becoming, according to the temperament of the onlookers, unendurably painful, gruesome, or terrifying in the extreme.

His boyhood in the Thuringian woods, his ardour for great poetry and heroic actions, his loves, his resentments, his ambitions, his wrongs, his passion for freedom and for the greatness of his race—to this they had brought him; here they all were ended.

V

Riouffe, the officer who had given the order to fire, stood biting his nails, scowling and muttering to himself. The fusiliers looked at each other in stupid silence; one of them, the conscript, wandering from the ranks, stood with bent head.

Two soldiers going up to the dead boy undid the cords. The body slipped in a huddled mass to the ground. Blood was oozing from several places in or about the breast. Corporal Boucherat, stepping briskly forward, bent over Staps and lifted the left hand—the hand that but three days ago had lain in Corvisart's so trustfully. It fell back pulseless and unanswering now.

"Dead as a stone, mon lieutenant," he said to Riouffe.

The fusiliers took up the shovels and spades; but at that moment a low iron-clamped door in the wall on their left opened and two superior officers in forage caps and undress uniform, accompanied by the commandant, General Lanier, began slowly to cross the courtyard.

There was an instantaneous excitement. Every man stood to arms. The conscript fell again into the ranks. "The duc de Rovigo in person!" he whispered irrepressibly. "Nom de Dieu, and General Rapp who commanded the Young Guard at Aspern."

"Shut up! Do you want to have us all on bread and water?"

Savary, without a word to anyone, went up to the trench and stood looking down on the dead. Two of the grenadiers approached with torches; but he motioned them away. The sky was now full of light.

Staps lay with his face partly turned to the earth, as though he had fallen forward on his wounds.

Savary with the toe of his boot slightly thrust aside the left arm which half hid the features; but by a kind of reflex action the arm returned to its place again.

"Uncover the face!" Savary commanded without turning round.

Lieutenant Riouffe gave an order and three soldiers sprang forward; one of the latter, kneeling, held the arm away from the face which looked up at Savary with the tranquil irony that death confers. The dead boy already

knew all or he knew nothing. His assassin still moved in a world of appearances.

"Enough!" said Savary, turning away, and in the same breath he added to Rapp, "C'est bien lui. That's our man."

At this moment, not murderous contentment but the gaze of Murder itself seemed to look from Savary's sinister countenance; the reports which made him play for Bonaparte the functions which the Borgias assigned to their private assassins were, if not justified, certainly made intelligible.

Rapp, a singular short stuttering in his throat, looked down in turn on the death-pale features in the death-pale dawn; he looked at the hands; he saw the threadbare clothes; one of the shoes was badly fastened, as though its wearer had been interrupted by the summons to his doom; the sole of the other was worn to the welt. He must often have been footsore, Rapp thought, not only on his long tramp from Erfurt to Vienna, but on his journeys to and from the inn to Schönbrunn.

"Well, he will be footsore no longer. What a waste! He had in him the stuff that would have made a brave man. What a waste!"

Staps's bearing at the court-martial had impressed him greatly.

"Shall we go now?" he said to Savary. "You are satisfied?"

The words were spoken with a soldier's deference to a superior and overtly referred only to the victim's identity; but through them pierced the accusation, "This is your handiwork; you are pleased with it?"

Savary gave a swift side-glance at the speaker; then with a gesture of haughty and overbearing disdain he strode on in front, motioning to Rapp and Lanier to attend him; and, scarcely noticing the subaltern's salute, the three officers

re-crossed the courtyard and disappeared through the door by which they had entered.

Corporal Boucherat's hard cherry voice broke the spell and the stupor.

"To work, lads, briskly, briskly!"

A gush of blood followed the raising of the body. It was held for a second or two over the trench, then dropped. A dull thud, a rattle of pebbles and earth marked its descent. One of the soldiers looked down into the pit.

"It's more like a pit than a grave. Are we to throw the earth on his face like that?"

"Sacrebleu, do you suppose he cares?" Corporal Boucherat sneered. "Perhaps you think he would like your shako over his mug? Throw it down if you've a mind," he said, with a wink to the subaltern, seeking his approval. "Briskly, lads. Briskly!"

The men grasped their shovels and spades and began hurriedly to fill in the earth, every now and then trampling it solidly down.

They were about to replace the slabs when they discovered that a considerable heap of earth was left over. Dropping their shovels, they clustered in various attitudes around the edge, staring now at the heap of earth, now at the earth in the grave. It could not be more tightly packed, yet it was only two inches from the surface.

Corporal Boucherat tested it with his foot, stamping on it at several points.

"God's curse!" he jerked out. "What's been dug out of the earth ought to be dug in again—n'est-de pas? Try again."

"I see it," one of the men muttered in an awed voice and his face went a sickly white.

"Sacrebleu!" the corporal exclaimed at the same moment, "I had not thought of that. The right amount—precisely," measuring the heap with his eye.

But the other five faces retained their look of stolid unintelligence.

"Le cadavre; espéce d'idiots! The dead body, fools!" the corporal ground out between his teeth. "Do you comprehend now? Clear off that earth. Anywhere you like. To the Danube if necessary, but get it out of here, every atom of it. Do you understand?"

The miscalculation was like the oversight of the assassin who removes every trace of his bloody act except a rusty button or a scrap of paper.

The slabs were carefully replaced.

"Everything right now, sir?" Boucherat said self-contentedly to the subaltern. "It only wants a drop of rain or a touch of frost and nothing'll be noticeable, nothing."

At a sign from Riouffe the sergeant turned to the grenadiers.

"Left wheel! Quick march!"

Once more the tramp of military footsteps broke the morning silences. They receded and the corporal and firing party alone were left in the court.

The grey-headed fusilier, whom a weakness for cognac had reduced to the ranks as often as his courage gave him promotion, turned to Boucherat.

"A short Sunday's work, corporal, and a bad, I call it; yes, ugly and bad."

"Snipe-shootin'," was the laconic retort.

"Ye-es," the other rejoined in his beery, familiar tones, "I've seen a snipe's head drop on its breast just like that boy's. It's infanticide, I call it. D'Enghien was at least a grown man."

"Bah, it's that you're thinking of, is it? Better think of your breakfast. He's had his chunk right enough—all he'll ever want. Fall in!"

"Murder will out, they say; murder will out."

"Not this time. We've made too clean a job of it. Fall in!"

The old fusilier slowly obeyed.

"Now for breakfast, lads!" Boucherat said jauntily. "Shoulder arms. Quick mar-r-ch!"

The rattle of muskets; then the swing of retreating steps; and in a second or two total silence reigned over the arsenal court and a grave. The dead leaves from the plane trees beyond the wall were already beginning to fall on the two slabs.

CHAPTER XVI

EPILOGUE

I

THE joy of the Viennese at the Peace of Schönbrunn ended with the night of the day on which it was signed. Not a single eye penetrated the arsenal walls to the crime enacted there at dawn; but three hours later every citizen felt himself in the tyrant's grip.

Shortly after eight o'clock warning notices were posted on church doors and on the doors of public buildings or on the shutters of closed shops, and on hoardings in the chief quarters of the city, commanding the inhabitants who lived near the ramparts to keep indoors. All citizens alike were forbidden to resort to the fortifications for the usual Sunday promenade. At ten o'clock handbills to the same effect were distributed from house to house in the Graben, St. Stephen's Place, in the Mehlmarkt, and the Alleegasse.

"For what possible reason?" the astonished burghers asked each other as they gathered in groups about the notice; and whilst they still rubbed their eyes they discovered the reason.

By the orders of the French Emperor the bastions were simultaneously or one after another to be blown up. The demilunes and galleries, the earthworks and subterranean forts—all, in a word, that composed the city's ancient walls, were to be destroyed or razed to the ground.

The consternation was mixed with incredulity, anger, and resentment.

"It is bluff," said one burgher. "There has been a hitch in the final negotiations," said a second. "But why did he proclaim the peace by cannon-shot yesterday? Is this the great Napoleon's magnanimity?" said a third. "Is it justice? Is it even law?"

"Might" it evidently was; might, if not right.

Attracted by the novelty many vagabonds and loafers and Viennese men and women of the working classes, the majority of mixed Slav, Magyar, Jewish, or Greek blood, thronged to watch the French engineers at work. They waited for the explosion as for a new kind of firework.

But the well-to-do citizens of German extraction, men of the bourgeois or middle-class, at once began to hold meetings in their private houses. It was speedily evident that in this matter Vienna must aid herself; for long before the hardest rider could reach Totis and Francis II. the work of demolition would be well begun if not completed.

At a semi-official meeting near the Mehlmarkt the idea of an immediate deputation to Schönbrunn was mooted. Was not Napoleon noted for his considerateness to such embassies?

The burgomaster that Sunday was at Presburg. Karl Morsch, his brother-in-law, however, a rich tradesman, was in Vienna, and to his roomy business premises in the Kohlmarkt the meeting at once removed. There amid the smell of grains, herbs, and seeds, the hurried meeting rapidly increased in numbers and at last fully seventy persons were present, all substantial citizens, many of them men who held or had held civic office.

To an observer who had visited Haarlem the scene would have recalled one of those paintings by Franz Hals, such as "The Archers of St. George." The faces of those seventy or seventy-five men were not handsome or impressive,

but all seemed to exude a vigorous, healthy energy; many were alert, clean-looking, capable men, representing a nation's wealth and something of a nation's power.

"In the regrettable absence of the burgomaster" Morsch was voted to the chair.

At first he spoke very quietly. A deputation, he said, had been proposed, in his own opinion it was the only course; and he suggested that it should consist of six citizens, two from each of the quarters most affected by this "extraordinary action of the French Emperor, an action contrary to the law of nations and of humanity." For his own part, he could not persuade himself that Napoleon wished to impose upon this great and ancient city so unprovoked and so unforgettable an insult.

Though a native of Vienna, Morsch was, on his mother's side, of Suabian origin and a relation of that Hauptmann Hermann who had displayed so conspicuous a valour at Aspern. Every man in the room knew very well the Suabian fury which was burning under those restrained words, and every man by his expression and by his deep guttural shouts of "Hoch! Hoch! Well said!" exhibited his sympathy or assured him of his support.

A dusky complexioned individual with puffy cheeks and a short thick beard that crept up to his eyes, rose and said, "Meine Herren! We all of us value the fervent patriotism of Herr Morsch, our burgomaster's brother-in-law. He has shared the dangers of the siege and of the war; but," he paused weightily, "is it certain that the destruction of the bastions is not an article of the Treaty? We may have purchased peace at that price——"

There was a chorus of confused astonishment; men turned their shoulders to look at the speaker, Hans Mauernbrecher. "What's that he says?"

But a new speaker had got on his feet. This was a man in a skull-cap, with a broad, smooth, clean-shaven face,

breathing intellect. He was a Levantine Greek, his father's name was Ypsilanti, but at an early age the son had adopted the German name of Schönthal. For long he had been not unfriendly to Napoleon, for he was interested in the movement for Greek independence; but now he was disillusioned, as the Poles were disillusioned, by Napoleon's reckless sacrifice of their aspirations to his own policy.

The purport of his speech was that the prestige of the unconquered Austrian army, whether under the Archduke or Liechtenstein, did not admit of the interpretation put upon Napoleon's proclamation by the preceding speaker. There must be some error. To suppose that Napoleon would demand, or Francis II. consent to, this humiliation of Vienna, was, in his judgment, an affront to both sovereigns. He therefore proposed that an authoritative deputation, twelve men representing every quarter of Vienna, should proceed to Schönbrunn and lay before the French Emperor a protest from the entire city.

Joseph Collin, a brother of the writer of the patriotic songs, sat watching the Levantine's face, and when the latter sat down he turned to his neighbour and whispered, "That man does not believe a word he is saying. But what is his game? This poisonous cosmopolitanism once more—ever the bane of Austria!"

Schönthal's proposal, however, won instantaneous assent. One querulous, foggy voice, the voice of an old man of seventy with a long beard, enquired whether it would not be wiser to get Andréossy to approach the Emperor. But again the tranquil, smooth-faced, wide-eyed Greek rose, and by a word or two demonstrated the error in this proposition. The deputation, he added, might take this opportunity of expressing Vienna's satisfaction in the peace and her gratitude for its prompt announcement yesterday.

"To whom is the peace a satisfaction?" Joseph Collin interpellated without getting on his feet.

"I will tell you," the Greek answered quietly. "It is a satisfaction to nearly nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Austria; for nearly every man is wearied of war. Aspern, you say, is a victory, and Wagram a drawn battle. Does not this treaty confirm that faith? Farther, the peace is a satisfaction to the Archduke and to his staff and to his generals, for the glory of it is their work. It is also a satisfaction to the enemies of the Archduke; for to them it seems his disgrace. It is a satisfaction to the young soldiers who see in it the reward of their valour; and to experienced soldiers because they know that we cannot prolong this war single-handed and therefore wish to wait till Russia or Prussia shall be with us."

Collin was about to answer, but there was a unanimous cry of "Vote! Vote!"

The election of the twelve deputies was at once proceeded with.

Three relations of the Burgomaster, of whom Biederkampf was the most noted, were the first nominated, then Mauernbrecher, then Schönthal and Joseph Collin for their fluency of speech; then Köhler, the manufacturer of boar-spears and fowling-pieces, owner of a large shop in the Graben. Four others were added in a breath—Wachsmuth an architect; Steiner, the attorney; Fuchs, a shipbuilder, and Zoll, a brewer.

It was agreed to set out for Schönbrunn within thirty minutes.

"But the carriages? And how many horses, two or four or six?" was now the cry.

The Levantine rose again.

"Six quadrupeds, I entreat you, gentlemen—unless we bipeds are to aid them in dragging our heavy vehicles to Schönbrunn."

There was some laughter. For who was to provide eighteen horses at a minute's notice?

II

Napoleon that morning woke in one of his happiest tempers. He whistled as he dressed or hummed in his strident falsetto "La Marche des Tartares," bringing a benevolent smile to the fat face of Rustum, that most faithful of slaves.

"You will be glad to see Paris again, you rogue?"

"Yes, me ver' glad, Sire: my leetle wife and two bébés are der."

But Napoleon had begun again "The March of the Tartars" and his thoughts were nearly as multitudinous and a myriad times swifter than the horsemen of Ginghis or Timour. His impatient mind was already devouring the future, the Russian alliance and its new phase; the Czar's probable resentment at the increase to the Duchy of Warsaw; his own designs against Constantinople and Egypt; the survey of the banks of the Drave; the demolition of the walls of Gratz and Klagenfurth; the erection of fortifications at Salzburg and at Passau.

"This Peace is a bridle-path," he said to himself, "but it ends in a highway to the Orient."

An immense pride possessed him, and the consciousness of an almost superhuman power. The incidents of the preceding day had encouraged his cynicism and scorn of men; but they had also heightened his sense of his intellectual superiority to others. He looked down on men as from a tower; his contempt for his entourage, for his generals as for his ministers, Berthier, Oudinot, Marmont, Bernadotte, Andréossy, Daru, Champagny, Maret, whose weaknesses one by one he had probed, extended to the whole human race, and now at this moment it concentrated itself in a sincere loathing and impatient contempt for the corrupt, frivolous, vain, weak, vacillating and pretentious Austro-Viennese.

The resolution to demolish the fortifications was the expression of this contempt.

His order to Bertrand was peremptory. He and his engineers were to occupy the next three days in destroying every trace of Vienna's walls. Galleries and subterranean works alike were to be "annihilated." Similar demolitions were to be carried out at Gratz, Brünn, Raab, and Klagenfurth. "Policy" was in this work of destruction, indisputably, for this exhibition of force would have a moral effect, it would sharpen Austria's sense of her own weakness; but in the main he was influenced by pride and conscious, irresistible power.

At breakfast, as his thoughts swept to Paris and Madrid, he rubbed his hands in amusement.

"Guiseppe—le pauvre Guiseppe!"

But in France he had a more piquant source of amusement. Amid the ramifications of his world-wide policy he had come nearer the solution of a private and domestic problem. This was the determination to be at Fontainebleu before Josephine—and then?

A malicious smile completed the thought.

For he had made up his mind to wall up the private passage between her room and his; so that when she arrived frightened, panting, and all in a fluster from Strasburg, she would have ready for her the double surprise of finding him at Fontainebleu and the passage between her room and his room blocked up.

He had his speech ready.

"Not I, but you yourself, by your conduct have built that wall."

He would thus in a moment avenge himself on her for all her monstrous infidelities; intrigue on guilty intrigue sullying his most glorious hours of triumph, from her abandoned profligacy at Milan in his first dazzling intoxication of genius thirteen years ago, to her inconsiderate reckless behaviour

at Strasburg only two months ago—all would by that sentence be erased, and all made plain.

III

About nine, on an urgent request, he gave an audience to Savary.

But at the sight of that minister, boding as a raven, Napoleon's gaiety and high-soaring speculation fell all to earth. He saw yesterday's court-martial; he saw the execution; the dismal scene in the spectacular darkness; the firing-party; the torches; the spades and shovels; the ready-made grave.

He frowned heavily and was about to dismiss Ménéval but changing his purpose, banging that drawer in the cabinet of his mind, he turned from the duc de Rovigo and remarked to Ménéval——

"To the King of Naples, add—'tis a fine sabre you have sent me.' But say that I cannot have him at Paris. The climate is bad for the Queen of Naples, my sister."

"Sire . . . your Majesty," Savary began.

Napoleon wheeled round—"Ah, monsieur le duc de Rovigo, what o'clock is it?"

"Nine o'clock, Sire."

"Come to me after chapel. I will hear you then."

The assassin, like the traitor, is never welcome even to those for whose benefit he has perpetrated his murders or his treason.

And Napoleon turned to Marbœuf and proceeded with the sketch of a plan, extending to three thousand words, for the fortification of Passau, four days up the Danube from Vienna, but strategically, in Napoleon's judgment, an integral portion of that city.

Amid these affairs the death or life of a German boy seemed an unimportant and far-off event,—so far-off and

unimportant that at such a moment and from such a distance Napoleon could not even see it!

IV

Shortly before noon the twelve deputies from Vienna reached Schönbrunn. They came in three coaches; one, much gilt-tasselled and befringed, carried Morsch, the burgomaster's brother-in-law, and three other deputies of high civic dignity or rank. This was drawn by six horses. In the second carriage, drawn by four horses, sat the Greek, Zacharias Schönthal, Joseph Collin, and two others. The third, also drawn by four horses, carried the two cousins of the burgomaster's wife, who ought not to have been deputies at all.

An outburst of patriotic enthusiasm had marked their departure from the Townhall; men and women crowded to press the hand of each deputy in turn; others thronged the windows; handkerchiefs and flags were waved. There were cheers for the burgomaster and for Morsch; cheers for the Emperor Francis and the Archduke Charles.

"We might have been starting for the front," Schönthal said, when the second carriage had jolted some half a mile beyond the Körnthnerthor.

Joseph Collin, to whom the remark was addressed, made no answer. In twenty minutes they would be at Schönbrunn; in twenty minutes they would confront the "Great Napoleon" and by their eloquence or their adroitness extort from him a concession which armies could not extort. Was this the season for a jest? And twirling his moustaches arranged in the Magyar fashion, he thought of the greatness of Austria and of his own and his brother's songs and upon the manner by which he could most effectively make Napoleon feel that he too was "no mean citizen and of no mean city."

Collin's was the state of mind prevailing amongst all the

deputies. That so august a commission would impress Napoleon could not be questioned. The problem now agitating each burgher-head was rather—How shall I individually impress the "great man?" In what posture shall I stand; by what speech shall I centre on me his attention? Their patriotism, their resolution to redress a wrong, had not abated; but Vienna's walls, the city's honour, had become the concern of the general body. It was something latent, vague, and undefined, that would no doubt make itself felt, and felt with masterfulness, at the right moment; meanwhile the individual, Karl or Franz, Johann or Ferdinand, was all in all.

"We live in strange times," observed the merchant with the flowing beard. "I remember our present emperor's uncle, Joseph II., that was, starting for the siege of Ismail."

"I can take you farther back than that," snarled a vinegar-faced little old fellow, badly shaven and with a mouth warped and twisted whether silent or speaking. "I remember Marshal Daun and I remember Fermor's march. That settled Frederick of Prussia. We should have had a Fermor and Russia now. Massacre! Massacre! That's how to treat these French dogs!"

The other deputies looked out of the windows. How had this fellow got elected? He might mar all by such a speech.

A row of gnarled and stunted oaks, an offshoot of the Wienerwald, blocked out the sky westward.

"There must have been a touch of frost," the Greek said in his suave yet unaffected voice. "Each day the leaves come down faster."

"Like the generations of men," the little old fellow interjected; and to Joseph Collin's astonishment he began to quote in Greek the great passage from the *Iliad*. Literary man as he was, this was more than Collin himself could have accomplished. Was this rough dog a man of culture then?

"Was Daun as good a soldier as the Archduke?" the Greek enquired, turning with great politeness to the little man.

"He was not a patch upon the Archduke," was the instant retort; "but he got good fighting out of his men; he made them feel they were Austrians, fighting for a great and sacred cause and for a great and good woman."

He took off his hat, as though the phantom of the dead empress had ridden past in all her strength and noble womanhood. "Ach, she was a fine woman, worth fighting for, worth dying for. You do not meet such women nowadays."

"I have seen Daun's prayer-book," Collin began, his voice sounding literary and very ordinary beside the Greek's distinction and the little old man's fiery emphasis. "He selected the verses himself, and made every soldier in his armies carry one, did he not?"

But Schönbrunn was in sight; the rose-granite of the obelisks, the noonday sun on the windows.

The front carriage was in parley with the French sentinels.

V

In the spacious "hall of audience" on the ground floor of the right wing the deputies waited, embarrassed, silent, standing solitary and apart or in knots of three or four.

The politeness or veiled insolence of the French officers had made them acutely aware of their position. The vanity or ebullient patriotism, the "victory of Aspern-Essling" attitude, as the Viennese wits had already begun satirically to name Austrian Chauvinism, had disappeared or dwindled considerably. No longer did each man ask—How shall I impress Napoleon? No longer did he ponder the posture he would assume; or, if he pondered that question at all, it was to answer it by arranging himself into some resemblance to the several attitudes consecrated to the

world-conqueror—the arms folded across the chest, or the hands locked behind the back and the head thrown forward as though in weighty meditation.

The scene was replete with comedy; it was replete with pathos.

And now as they stood in this splendid room amid those memorials of luxury and grandeur, those paintings, ornaments, hangings,—in this vast silence broken only by the measured footsteps of the French sentries, each man's birth, his habits, his social environment, temper of mind, his character in a word, his state of health, the manner in which he had passed the preceding night,—all became manifest.

"Are we," the Moravian began with his fatuous importance, "are we, the citizens of Vienna, to address the French Emperor as 'Our gracious Majesty' when he is not 'our' Majesty—neither our king nor our emperor? And ought not we to sit down? They haven't brought us chairs."

Indeed, there was only one chair visible and that at the opposite end of the room from that in which the deputies stood huddled. That solitary chair was placed on a crimson carpet and its tall back in crimson velvet was studded and fretted with gold.

"It is always open to you to ask for a chair," the Greek said pleasantly, "or to sit on the floor."

Morsch, the burgomaster's brother-in-law, intervened categorically.

"You are not to open your mouth, Hans; no, not the width of a finger-nail, unless to express your astonishment; and you are to stand as firm as your weak hams will let you; and see that you don't turn your back to the Emperor when once he enters. French or German, an emperor is an emperor all the world over. As for the address, what is to be spoken, the manner of the speech and by whom has all been settled. I am to speak of the walls and forti-

fications; Collin here of the restoration of guns and trophies; Biederkampf of the danger of the simultaneous blowing-up of the bastions; Schönthal, if he will be so kind, of the general position—the glory of temperance and mildness in conquerors, the past of Vienna, and of what is due from a conqueror to so ancient a city. Not another man is to say a word, unless of course Bonaparte" (speaking the name very low after the style usual amongst the Viennese nobility) "address him personally. Even in that case it will be wise to answer as thus—That I myself, Herr Morsch, or Dr. Schönthal, or Herr Collin, 'can answer Your Majesty's question better than I can.'"

"Well, it is as God wills," the Moravian answered, "but if he asks my name, as my wife's father told me he did on a former occasion when the keys of our city were the dispute, or my age, or how many children I have, shall I not answer for myself? Shall I say that Herr Collin or yourself know such things better than I do?"

"Well, even in that case it would be wiser and safer to refer the matter to me," Morsch answered. "Is it understood?"

"It is as God—" he began, but trembling he interrupted himself—"Mother of Christ, yonder he comes!"

Instinctively the twelve men drew closer together, exactly as men do when confronted by some unexpected danger. There they stood, their twelve heads rising one above the other, as if thus jostled they could better see or better understand the portent.

Napoleon, without vouchsafing them so much as a glance, walked straight to the chair of state, sat down, rose again, and with a step which to Collin at least and to Schönthal suggested a tiger's stealthy powerful glide, began to walk to and fro in front of it. Something had evidently disturbed him extremely; his step was irregular and violent; his brow was like a thunder-cloud, yet it did not seem anger. "Some

painful interview which their arrival had interrupted?" thought the Greek, studying that singular being whom he could never observe enough, in whom he never saw twice the same man. "Or some intelligence from Paris or Madrid?"

Visibly before his eyes, Napoleon's brow became clearer. Its commanding and desolate power returned. Now he seemed to be aware of their presence, and stopping in his rapid walk, exactly, Collin thought, like some forest king might stop, he looked at them, and almost instantly he began to speak, his voice sounding curiously shrill, raucous and ineffective in this huge empty room; speaking in a French which was not that of Vienna, and could hardly be that of Paris.

It seemed, indeed, extraordinary to Schönthal that this man should speak at all, unless with war-drums, in the silver blare of trumpets, or in the thunder of artillery and charging horsemen.

"You are come to demand the preservation of your walls and of your bastions?" the Emperor began. "You wish me to restore your cannon and your trophies of victory? Honour can be purchased only on the battlefield. Is it perhaps for sale in the markets of Vienna? Of what value are the memorials of victory to a thrice-vanquished nation? And those obsolete fortifications—why do you desire to retain them? Defend your city they cannot. Of this you twice have had proof."

There was a kind of scoffing reasonableness in his voice and bearing; and when he had spoken the last words he glanced from Morsch, prominently in the middle of the group, to Collin on his right, to Biederkampf and to the Brünn wheat-merchant, as though in search of a human face upon which his eyes might rest and feel the presence of an intellect or a will.

Napoleon's next words summed up with astonishing

definiteness the result of his survey; for his glance had seemed to rest upon nothing.

"One cannot make concessions to the abject without derogating from the reverence we owe to the brave."

Valour, these Viennese merchants reflected, was then to this man the Godhead. Valour in battle the last and highest test of merit and man's life? And theirs was gold. Was it surprising that though they had appeared men of importance in the Townhall that morning, merchant-princes even, here they appeared common as dirt, mere sutlers or camp-followers? His ways of life were not theirs; nor his thoughts their thoughts.

Napoleon, as though fatigued by their mere presence, seemed about to quit the room and end the audience. This gave Morsch resolution. The speech which he had prepared he could not deliver; but he jerked out, not without effect, the words:

"Of our walls we all are proud. They are the city's most ancient monument. Venerable are they to every Viennese as our cathedral itself is venerable. Your Majesty cannot——"

But here he stopped.

The peppery little old man, who had no right to speak, reassumed his terrier-like aggressiveness; and seeking by ornate diction to match Napoleon's style, he robbed his words of their effectiveness.

"The trophies are trophies we captured ourselves on the stricken field. And we forged the cannon from the metal of guns abandoned by the Ottoman yonder at Zenta and here before our very walls. Every Viennese values them as though he had shed his own blood in winning them."

But a new order of ideas had arisen in Napoleon's mind and exactly as though no one had spoken he began,— "The Sicilians chained the Athenians in their mines. I have in France a hundred-thousand English and German,

two hundred-thousand Spanish and Portuguese prisoners toiling in my galleys, draining my marshes, digging my canals. Why to that multitude have I not added two hundred-thousand Viennese? Your lives are forfeit; you hold them by my sufferance. Every inch of ground on which your city stands, every stone in its churches, palaces, public buildings, and private houses is mine." Then looking at each man in the room yet seeming to see none, he said brusquely—"You speak of your ancient walls and of your guns captured from the Turks. Who defended those walls and captured the guns? Not your Emperor, not your Habsburgs. It was a Polish king and the valour of a Polish army. And I, I like a second Sobieski restore to you your city; but not the guns. These I will give to my allies, the Poles, to whom they rightfully belong; and as for your walls, I raze them to the ground the better to guard you against the temptations of your own vanity or your own folly. When you look upon their ruins, you may learn to reflect. Their scarred and naked foundations may be a reminder to you of God's vengeance and your own madness in twice waging unprovoked and treacherous war upon Napoleon!"

He pronounced these words in tones that even in their menace were threaded by melancholy cadences. But it was a melancholy obviously aloof from the present audience, arising from some inward obsession, lasting or ephemeral.

"Sire, is this civilized warfare?" the Greek interposed; for Morsch seemed palsied; Collin embarrassed; whilst Biederkampf stood shifting from one foot to the other.

"Ha?" Napoleon exclaimed. "You are a connoisseur in civilized warfare, monsieur, you? What is civilization? I will tell you. That State is the most civilized in which a heroic life is most within the reach of every citizen; and that State again is the most civilized in which human life has

most value set on it. It is by these attributes that France is distinguished from Athens; Rome from Byzantium. But Austria? You have in Austria neither law nor justice; your fortresses are full of dungeons and in your dungeons your noblest citizens rot; you have torture; you still retain the rack. But what is your name?" he said suddenly.

The Levantine's face had separated itself from the crowd. Its pallor, its impassivity, its evidence of breed, recalled to him Talleyrand's; inferior indisputably, but more honest.

"Schönthal, your Majesty."

"Schönthal? You have not the look of a German."

"My father was a Greek; I adopted my mother's name."

But Napoleon did not hear the words.

"It is you yourselves who have brought this on yourselves. The citizens who submit to a government are the accomplices of that government. Why did your Emperor make war as soon as he saw me set out for Spain? I could have dethroned him. Instead I restore him to you. Is any price too high for this gift? Value it. He is an amiable, kind-hearted if weak and erring old man. And as for your guns—well, there is a way to recover them, there is a way to repossess these trophies of your armed valour."

A singular evil mocking light scintillated in his eyes.

"What way, Sire?"

It was Morsch who spoke the words, in his quietest, most earnest manner.

"Come to Paris, and wrench them away by force."

Nothing could exaggerate the rapidity of the utterance, the variety of expressions which succeeded each other on Napoleon's countenance—impatience, contempt, menace, infinite pride, mockery, yet withal a kind of superhuman heroic might.

All the Suabian in Morsch flamed up.

"Your Majesty may yet compel us to take that way," he said with energy, and stood trembling; for he felt that by

those words he had ruined a cause which he had deeply at heart.

Napoleon, who from the first had seen in him a German of the Germans—one of those "ideologues" who made on him the same uncomfortable impression always—turned swiftly and seemed about to annihilate him for his boldness.

But annoyed that by his own petulance he had made such a retort possible—"À la bonne heure, monsieur!" he exclaimed. "It will give me a pleasure that fate till now had much denied me—the pleasure of a perfect admiration!"

He made a signal of dismissal.

And stiffly or awkwardly, keeping their faces towards him, the twelve deputies quitted the audience hall.

Exactly four and a half years later the Austrian Schwartzenberg and his white-coats were within the walls of Paris, —and Morsch's sullen threat, torn from him in a moment of exasperated humiliation, was fulfilled to the letter.

VI

That same afternoon Napoleon set out for Paris, leaving Schönbrunn at five o'clock, and leaving it for ever.

He rode in the State carriage drawn by eight horses; in front and behind along the route glittered a strong detachment of the cuirassiers of the Guard. Crossing the Wien, the cortège struck into the high road which leads past St. Polten and Mölk to Linz; thence, with the Styrian Alps glittering on the northern horizon, to Scharding where the road debouches down the valley of the Inn to Passau.

Napoleon and his escort were not four miles beyond Vienna when a distant and sullen detonation made him turn and glance back towards the city.

Distinctly through the shimmering haze he saw a vertical column of smoke spring to a considerable height and flattening, slowly extend like a roof above the north-western

quarter of the suburbs. Whilst he still gazed, a second column sprang up and a second detonation was borne to him; and in rapid succession a third, a fourth, and a fifth followed; and the evening wind, blowing together and mingling the tufted capitals of these pillars, covered gradually the whole city, its spires, domes, roofs, gables with a stupendous canopy of yellowish-grey and black and sulphurous smoke.

"He has begun ten minutes later than I ordered," Napoleon said to himself. "N'importe; he has begun."

And after another scanning look, estimating the segment of the walls represented by the two extreme smoke-columns he sank back on the cushioned silk of the carriage, resuming his somnolent brooding.

What he had seen was the work of General Bertrand and his engineers destroying the fortifications of Vienna.

The carriage tore on. The route now approached the Danube and passed several villages. The children came out to stare and for a short distance to scamper behind the escort.

Still the miles swept past.

Napoleon, from a rack in front neatly packed with some thirty small volumes, took out a book, read a paragraph yawned, thrust it back.

"Idiot!"

It was Marmontel.

How few readable books there are in the world, he reflected. But the capacity to admire anything in art, poetry, music, or sculpture, had almost dried up in him. Life, the beating hour, actuality, was his; but books, poems, histories, romances, dramas—how stilted, uneventful, unobserved and desiccated! And all the writers and poets of earth, Homer, Voltaire, Corneille, even Ossian, what dull observers of an indistinct corner of a planet, equally unable to live themselves and to invent some fitting and final

word upon the life they only ponder—upon human glory, action, suffering, strife, grief, victory, unconquered disaster —upon anything of this infinite, bewildering, embarrassingly varied and exhilarating phantasmagoria of triumph and mysteriousness! But he, he had life; he had power, like that of a God.

He glanced now and then at the landscape, but, his mind fixed on an inward landscape, he saw nothing. The shadow of a tree crept along the sward; then, an unnatural time afterwards, the tree itself loomed up, darkening the carriage a moment, and, with its thinning leaves, was swept behind into the past.

The vastnesses were again beckoning to him. A gigantic enterprise had been wrought to its event; yonder in front of him, another waited, unachieved.

And leagues behind him the sun touched with its glory the smoke-pall above Vienna, and caught as in a golden net with the long grass of the Marchfeld, the charred ruins of villages, the ashes of extinct camp-fires, a solitary homestead, and the graves of men.

THE END

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